

## QUILT SHOW PROGRAM

### “Pieces of the Past: The Rebekah Cessna Quilt Collection”

**Rebekah Williams Cessna**, a quilter herself from Missouri City, TX, has collected these quilts for their personal appeal to her. Several have Texas themes; quite a few come from the hills of Kentucky and Tennessee, the home of Cessna’s paternal family, where she visits often. Many of the quilts were quilted by hand on old-fashioned wooden quilt frames hung from the ceiling. It is the quilts that exhibit a personal or sincere nature that Cessna says most intrigue her. The coal miner motif, probably an original design, is one of her favorites. She says she built her collection on pieces that speak to her in an authentic, honest way.

“I wanted to express admiration for the women who made them, how they made a practical item as beautiful as they could with what they had,” says Cessna about why she collects the quilts. It is her pleasure to share them with the public through the Galveston Historical Foundation.

#### **1. Brown framed Medallion Star, c1840 69” x 77”**

Antebellum Quilt pieced with calico, indigo plains, double pink dyed and “poison green” fabrics. The quilter was wealthy enough to own much of the same fabrics to piece the design. The stitching is very small and exact with a square maze pattern. Probably quilted by one person rather than a “bee” due to the uniformity of stitches. Notice the cut out for the bed posters. This quilt is especially unusual as the green has remained its true color rather than fading to brown from exposure. This shows it was a “special Occasion Quilt”. Imagine stitching this by firelight after doing chores such as hoeing, cooking over fire, milking cows, churning butter and chasin’ several young children!

#### **2. Embroidered Roses, pink sashings, muslin border 71” x 82”**

A later day quilt, appears to be made with pre-printed blocks for the embroidery

#### **3. Embroidered State Flowers, blue sashing 60” x 75”**

Made before 1948 as there are only 48 states represented. These transfer kits often came with transfers of a complete set.

#### **4. Lone Star with pink borders 65” x 75”**

Made of feed sack fabrics. The extra stars in the corners and the central star not extending to the edge of the quilt makes this an unusual setting of this pattern.

#### **5. Grandma’s Flower Garden with initials, 1937 73” x 82”**

A friendship quilt was often made for friends or family as a going away gift, to commemorate a special event such as a wedding or just as a gift to a well-liked and respected individual. Dated in ink 1937, each the centers is inked with the initials of the ones who wished to be remembered to the honoree.

**6. Hot Pink Posies, green and pink sashing 76" x 77"**

Made by the coal miner's wife in Eastern KY in 2007, this is an appliqué pattern that is beautiful for its color scheme and the simplicity of the flower design.

**7. Hexagon Brown Basket 81" x 87"**

A recent quilt from Appalachia. Hexagons are difficult to piece because of the six sides that must match evenly on all the pieces. This is probably an original design. The size of the quilt means an exceptional amount of work was put into this.

**8. Mamaw Lillie's scrap Circle in a Square 84" x 92"**

This quilt was made by Cessna's husband's 99 year old grandmother for her daughter. She was 97 at the time she completed it. There is a date of 1965 on one block. The scraps had been collected from the clothing she made for herself, her daughters and grandchildren. The fabrics date from the 1950's to the 1990's. Pieces of Cessna's daughter's grandmother's dresses are in it and will be a cherished keepsake for her. Again this is a quarter circle block same as in the Drunkard's Path and Princess Feather quilts, but placed in a circle in a square setting.

**9. Baby Blue Ohio Stars, with political cartoons 53" x 53"**

An unusual baby quilt because of the "political cartoons" added to some of the blocks. The process of transferring the picture to the cloth is unknown but was done with ink, most of which has faded except for the orange and some of the green. The blue pieced blocks are Ohio Stars and are precisely pieced. The cartoons appear to be from the Depression Era. The cartoons are difficult to read but one appears to be of a drunk man being carried home, tied to a stick by two men. Another appears to be a hobo begging at housewife's door. The reason for adding these inappropriate cartoons is a mystery. Could it be the maker just liked the pictures and may have been illiterate?

**10. Scrap Fan with hot pink border 62" x 77"**

From an antique quilt shop in Etowah, TN. Women saved scraps from all the sewing for their families and designed quilts using a variety of fabrics.

**11. Yellow Pineapple 67" x 77"**

The use of black thread is unusual. The Pineapple pattern has been popular since the late 1800's and was usually paper pieced.

**12. Polyester Roses, green trim 66" x 83"**

Another quilt made by the Mountaineer in Eastern Kentucky. Although polyester is not a popular fabric for quilts, the maker used it for appliqué, thus requiring no turning of the edges and giving the flowers more depth than the flat surfaces of cotton.

**13. Yellow & Green Carolina Lily, no binding 70" x 79"**

For some reason the quilt was not completely finished with the binding. However because it is not bound, it is possible to see the 3 layers making up a traditional quilt.

**14. Bright green and white Drunkard's Path 71" x 84"**

From an antique store in Cleveland, TN. This quilt is an example from the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is a difficult block to piece of a quarter circle that is squared. There are many ways to place these blocks to form entirely different patterns. This one is Drunkard's Path.

**15. Cathedral Window on muslin, eyelet trim 74" x 88"**

Another non-quilting quilt made up of a folding and stitch technique

**16. Oak Leaf & Reel, red & green 75" x 79"**

This was a popular pattern from the early to mid 1800's. The reds (turkey red) and greens (poison green) were common colors used, along with Cheddar yellows and indigo blues.

**17. Turkey Red Friendship Album Blocks 86" x 94"**

A quilt made for "going away". This was usually made by ladies of a congregation whose pastor was moving on. It was made at a time when the American West was being settled and many headed West from the Atlantic States. The inked inscriptions are signed with towns in Connecticut and many beg the receiver to "remember me".

**18. Extra Large Texas Lone Star in brown, gold, and red 70" x 73"**

Dating from the mid to late 1880's. The browns may have at one time been green. The colors of Turkey Red, Cheddar Yellow and Poison Green were the most common fabrics of this era. May have come from PA or OH. The lighter printed pieces are shirting fabric. The design is unusual because of the strips between and where the points end. This, along with the stand out colors, give it a beautiful graphic look

**19. Rolling Star with red border 78" x 79"**

A beautiful quilt of scraps from clothing is well pieced and laid out with an eye catching design

**20. Poppy Applique in green, red on white 79" x 86"**

These were made from patterns and kits ordered through the newspaper or catalogs. Various all over floral appliqués were popular in the 1950's and 60's. Some of the companies that supplied the kits were Ruby McKim, Nancy Page and Grandma Dexter. They also ran columns and newsletters written by quilters using the pseudonyms above.

**21. Texas Gas Flame appliqué 60" x 78"**

This quilt was actually (and obviously) made in Texas although exact location and the maker are unknown. The appliqué is an original design. This quilt would date from the 1930's to late 1940's and would most likely have been made for display at a special industry function or building.

**22. Texas 2-Step Star w feed sack backing and border 63" x 82"**

This quilt was pieced of mostly feed sacks including the yellow backing and edge that still has the imprint of "Moon Feeds" on the fabric.

**23. Cottage on the Hill, grn & tan 69" x 80"**

From the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, maker unknown

**24. Tobacco Silks Flags, tacked, indigo back 70"w x 64"**

This unusual quilt shows once again the thriftiness and artistic eye of the quilt makers of that time. Each piece is a tobacco silk with the flags of various countries, some of which no longer exist or have changed flags. Notice the Russian Flag is the flag of today. That would have been the flag of Russia before communism. The American flags contain 36 stars, dating this quilt between 1864 and 1867, when Nebraska the 37<sup>th</sup> state was admitted to the union. The quilt is not actually quilted, but tacked. This is a method of putting all three layers together by making a stitch through the layers and then tying it off. This quilt most likely came from Western North Carolina or Eastern Tennessee.

**25. Strip Quilt, muslin, civil war era 67" x 90"**

Apparently this quilt was made during or just after the Civil War in the Eastern South because it is very much a "make do" quilt. Fabric was scarce and was pieced with speed and simplicity, often not enough fabric was available for a complete strip so another fabric was added. These quilts were also made for the soldiers because there were no bedrolls and the home front women wanted to keep their loved ones warm.

**26. Coal Miner 68" x 76"**

A contemporary quilt with an original design, this eye-catching quilt was obtained from an elderly lady in the small coal-mining village far back in the Appalachian Mountains of East Kentucky. Living as many of the people there do in small houses,

the quilter used a quilt frame that could be lowered over the bed for quilting. Using pulleys it was raised back up to the ceiling when not in use. The maker's husband was suffering from "black lung", a disease common to coal miners that required him to remain on oxygen and sapped his strength. Quilting is her way to earn money to cover the expenses.

**27. Sawtooth Stars on point, gold sashing, plaid back 67" x 75"**

Probably 1800's because of the fabric dating. The backing may have been added later as it is a more recent fabric.

**28. Bright Yellow Flower Baskets 74" x 90"**

A popular scrap quilt pattern of the late 1900's. The colors are eye-catching. Rescued from the internet, it was being sold as a "cutter quilt", to cut up for different projects such as pot holders. Notice the one block with no basket. It is perhaps a "humility block" or a repair job.

**29. Diamond in Square, blue & red 67" x 87"**

Typical of an "Amish Style" quilt with simple lines and minimal design, these quilts made of scraps of Amish clothing reflect the beauty in simplicity. The quilt came from Pennsylvania

**30. Embroidered Nursery Rhyme baby quilt 32" x 38"**

May have originally been "redwork" that faded over time. From the Victorian era, many dyes were unstable and would fade from exposure to air and sunlight.

**31. Grandma's Flower Garden, blue baby quilt 31" x 45"**

A very well-made quilt. Flowers of shirting fabric. Tiny hexagons are well-matched at the points. This is difficult work.

**32. Red Oak Leaves, appliquéd baby quilt 34" x 44"**

Bought at the Amana Colonies near Iowa City, IA. The Amana colonies were established in the 1850's by a religious group from Germany. It was a communal life where the kitchens were shared, no wages were earned and all resources combined. The colonies were self-sustaining with their own schools, church, brewery and mills. Now it is a historical site. Although a few of the families remain, it is now an integrated community that has become a haven for artisans from around the world.

**33. (On the bed) Crazy Quilt, 1884 63" x 62"**

This type of covering is not really a quilt as it involves no actual quilting, only piecing that has a backing applied. The crazy quilt became wildly popular during the Victorian Era when heavily decorated items were used in homes full of other decorative items.

Many of these quilts are dated and often with the quilter's name or initials. Velvets, silks and rich fabrics were used as backgrounds to showcase embroidery, appliqué, added other embellishments showcasing the maker's personality. Usually each piece is "crazily set", totally disregarding a preconceived pattern, and embroidered around the edges with all varieties of decorative stitches. In an "anything goes" theme, many pieces were covered with hatband labels, cigar silks, political and historical ribbons, and any other novelty the quilter wanted to use. Young girls especially enjoyed this art form and would exchange them among themselves. The crocheted edging is a fine example and was common to this type of art form.

**34. (On bed) Black Velvet Squares, Embroidered & Applique 59" x 47"**

Black square-in-a-square blocks with multi-colored frames, all in velvet. Center medallion of black is encircled by six black squares that are decorated. Each block has been embroidered with many types of thread and some have appliqué as well. The throw is attached to pre-quilted material, and is trimmed in piping of silk rope. Even with the wear and missing threads it still looks elegant.

**35. Sunbonnet Sue with alternating blocks 70" x 84"**

From East TN, this is a well-made example of a popular pattern that was introduced in the 1930's. It is still popular in several variations, including an Overall Sam boy. Almost every little girl with a quilter in the family had one of these.

**36. Scrap Pinwheel, with pink gingham 72" x 79"** Dating from the Depression to WWII era. Many shirting fabrics are used.

**37. Princess Feather, pink and green quarter circle 68" x 82"**

Quarter circle blocks are the same as those used in Drunkards Path, but are laid out in the Princess Feather setting. Princess Feather is actually the name of an applique pattern popular in the late 1700's and early 1800's. The appliques were so large only four blocks were used for an entire quilt. This setting is reminiscent of that pattern.

**38. Flower Bouquet Applique, pink and blue 82" x 84"**

An example of the quilt kits popular in the 1950's

**39. Painted & Embroidered Flowers, pink sashing 64" x 71"**

Probably from a "kit" or bought as individual transfer patterns such as Aunt Martha's. The combination of paint and thread make this especially lovely and dimensional

#### **40. Segmented Dresden Plate with green 4-leaf clovers 70" x 88"**

Bought in an antique store in Eastern Tennessee. The quilter had a sewing machine which she was quite proud of back when the sewing machine for home use was still novel. She hand pieced and appliquéd the Dresden plate flowers except for a few that she machine stitched, predominately in the pink centers. Since the appliques are not applied with careful accuracy, the quilt appears to be more of a "show off" piece for the sewing machine, although the pattern is an original variation of the Dresden Plate.

#### **41. Whole Cloth Amish wedding quilt, peach 70" x 79"**

Note attached says made for a daughter's wedding in the 1900's. This quilt was bought in the Amish community of Kalona, IA. It is unusual for an Amish quilt in that the cloth was of a lighter color. Although using one color whole cloth, with a beautiful but demure quilting, it is "plain" but beautiful.

#### **42. Blue velvet wedding throw 73" x 62"**

Very unusual piece that appears to be more like a throw. The pieced top is not quilted but an intricately quilted backing was attached. This appears to have been made for a wedding, as it includes many symbols of marriage: there is a shoe, an anchor for fidelity, doves and roses for love, lilies for purity, a horse shoe for luck, as well as the initials of two people. Origin and maker is unknown.

#### **43. Redwork Embroidered Summer Top, 1893 79" x 69"**

Not actually a quilt but a "summer coverlet". It is a single layer and the type of design is known as "redwork" which was popular in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially in the South. There is a quilter in TN who believes it may have been a table cloth, but it is highly unlikely that much precise, complex and artistic work would be put to use where it could likely become stained. However another suggested that with the thrift of the times, it may have been used both as a summer coverlet and a table covering when the table was not in use. Coming from the hills of East Pennsylvania, the coverlet is signed by Emma Leachman and dated 1893. She was even brave enough to add her age for posterity! Many of the scenes appear to be originals including a block with her glasses and sewing tools, a block noted as *Mother's Chair* and another as *The Old Home Place*. Proverbs and Bible verses are embroidered into many of the blocks including birds, flowers, religious and patriotic symbols. This type of work and personalization is unique and is helpful in learning more about the woman's life and the times she lived which is highly unusual in most work done by women at the time.

