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Review of *Border to Border: Historic Quilts and Quiltmakers of Montana* by Annie Hanshew

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State-wide efforts to document quilts began with the Kentucky project in 1981; by 2010 more than fifty books reported the findings of projects in thirty-seven states. *Border to Border* is the culmination of the Montana Historic Quilt Project, which began in 1987 and ultimately registered more than 2,000 quilts. A perceptive introduction by Mary Murphy, professor of history at Montana State University–Bozeman, places Montana quilts within a wider context not only of needlework and women’s roles, but also of westward expansion, industrialization, transportation networks, consumerism, fairs and expositions, and other state and world events. Murphy commends the Montana project for naming the makers and recording the stories of hundreds of quilts, and for providing a means for envisioning Montana’s past.

Annie Hanshew divides Montana quilt history into five chronological periods, highlights significant events, illustrating them with plentiful historic photos and graphics, and then spotlights numerous period quilts. She reports family stories and documents known provenances, including those of many quilts brought to Montana from other states.
Within individual quilt stories, well-cited references to the broader worlds of both history and quiltmaking add interest and value. For example, Hanshew notes adoption of the Drunkard’s Path pattern as a symbol of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, the prevalence of Red Cross quilts as fundraisers during World War I, interest in commemorative quilts, and the tradition of Plains Indian Star quilts. Likewise, she explains the influence of commercial dye production on a quilt color scheme; the reason for a top border known as a chin, whisker, or beard guard; the adaptability of hexagon patchwork; and the influence of published quilt patterns distributed by mail order companies.

Seven of the seventy-seven featured quilts are of the “crazy” variety—surely a disproportionate amount—which suggests that the availability of good stories trumped representation of the widest possible variety of quilt styles found in Montana. The final chapter, covering 1970 to the present, lacks the sharp historical context and sense of cohesion that is prevalent elsewhere.

The well-written text is enhanced by more than 160 color photos of quilts, including dozens of details. Unfortunately, less than half of the quilts are shown in full view on a single page. The remaining images are distorted because they span the gutter, or incomplete because they bleed off the page.

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