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White, Lynn, "Review of Lone Stars: A Legacy of Texas Quilts, 1936-1986 and Nemaska Quilts and Quiltmakers" (1992). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 704.

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Lone Stars: A Legacy of Texas Quilts, 1936-1986.

By Karoline Patterson Bresenhan and Nancy O'Bryant Puentes. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990. Definition of terms, selected reading list. 195 pp. \$39.95 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

Nebraska Quilts and Quiltmakers. Edited by Patricia Cox Crews and Ronald C. Naugle. Color photographs by Roger Bruhn. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991. Notes, selected bibliography, indexes. ix + 245 pp. \$40.00 cloth, \$25.00 paper.

These lovely volumes are celebrations of quilts, of women, and of the states they represent. They are intended for a lay audience of quilters and quilt collectors and, more broadly, anyone interested in graphic arts.

These volumes represent a regional expression of a larger folk history movement in the United States. Beginning with Kentucky, nearly every state in the U.S. has started a state quilt history project. In the Great Plains, the Oklahoma project has already resulted in a published volume, and the Texas project previously yielded a volume on quilts from 1836-1936. Organized

and staffed primarily by volunteers from local quilt guilds, these projects hold a series of quilt days across the state, and the public is invited to bring *all* their quilts (especially old ones) that have state connections. These projects are folk history in two senses: they are history gathered by the folk and of the folk—more particularly, womenfolk.

Both of these volumes have the same format: A lengthy introduction that attempts to set the quilts and their makers in socio-historical context, and then a dazzling array of color photographs of quilts, each accompanied by a short biography of the maker, a technical description of the quilt, and a history of the quilt. In both volumes the color photography is excellent, the quilts fascinating, and the biographies interesting. The volume on Texas quilts offers selected reading lists on women's history, Texas history, quilting, and quilt preservation.

Scholars may criticize these volumes on a number of grounds. Two deserve note: historical accuracy and representativeness. The stories told about how great-grandma came West probably suffer from a variety of inaccuracies, including errors of omission, embellishment, and distortion. Although they cannot be taken as evidence about history, they are useful as indicators of popular culture; they embody the teller's beliefs about the West, about women, the family, and quilts as art and symbol. Thus they may tell us more about the present than the past. The Nebraska volume does, however, make a special effort to correct myths about the past, noting, for example, that the average woman in the 1880s was having three to four children rather than seven to eight and that a substantial number of these quiltmakers were employed before marriage.

The editors of neither volume tell us how they selected the 200-odd quilts out of the tens of thousands available to be included in the volume. Presumably the most noteworthy quilts were chosen to represent each style and epoch. Although this makes a more visually appealing volume, it detracts from the books' use for other purposes: neither the quilts nor the quiltmakers are representative of their eras.

Both volumes are almost totally restricted to quilts made by Euroamerican women. This restriction is striking in that there has been a sharp increase in interest in and exhibitions of African-American and Native-American quilts in the last five years. In fact, the publication of the Nebraska volume coincided with a showing of "Quilts from the Rosebud [Reservation]" at the State Museum at Lincoln. Although these omissions probably are due to poorer preservation of the quilts of women of color and by lack of participation of these women in quilt day projects rather than deliberate omission, the failure of the authors to seek out these quilts and especially their failure to acknowledge the cultural bias of the volumes is striking.

As a result of these characteristics, the volumes will be of most use to quilters and other enthusiasts of the graphic arts. For those interested in quilts or the women who made them, the dedication of the volunteers who collected the photographs and stories of these quilts before they disappeared should be much appreciated and the volumes enthusiastically received.

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