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Patricia Cox Crews

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, pcrews1@unl.edu

Wendelin Rich

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

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NEBRASKA QUILTS, 1870-1989: PERSPECTIVES ON TRADITIONS AND CHANGE

Patricia Cox Crews and Wendelin Rich

*Department of Textiles, Clothing and Design
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Lincoln, NE 68583-0802*

Abstract. *This study of Nebraska-made quilts spans the years from the 1870s through the 1980s, which extends from the early settlement of the state through the recent farm crisis. The descriptive profile of Nebraska quilts that emerged highlights the many similarities of Nebraska-made quilts to other American quilts of the same periods. Analysis shows that Nebraska quilts reflected the technological, artistic, and social trends of the times and points to changes in popularity of quilt types and pieced and applique patterns over the years. Although distinctive quilt types, styles, and quilting practices were reported in other states, Nebraska quilts are notable for their conservative character, the absence of exceptional qualities, and their tendency to reliably reflect national trends in quilting. Quantitative summaries and analyses of a state's quilts can be important in the construction and rewriting of American textile history.*

A great resurgence of interest in quilts during the last two decades led to efforts to study the subject in a systematic and serious manner. Quilters in numerous states initiated statewide surveys beginning in the early 1980s in an effort to document and preserve quilts made or used in their states. An important objective was to record knowledge about quilts and their respective makers while the quilts remained in private hands, usually those of the quiltmakers or their descendants. Quilters in Nebraska joined what became a nationwide effort when they organized the Nebraska Quilt Project (NQP) with meetings beginning in 1985.

Statewide quilt surveys were undertaken with the belief that any quilt can yield valuable data on design, materials, and construction techniques; but, if quilts are studied in their geographical and historical context, the value of the data is greatly increased. In addition, statewide quilt surveys were undertaken with the hope that information garnered would help scholars produce increasingly detailed and accurate studies of quilts. By focusing on particular states or regions, it was expected that larger trends would slowly become visible (Holstein 1983).

This study sought to develop a comprehensive and quantitative profile of Nebraska-made quilts registered by the NQP. The aim was to broaden and deepen knowledge of the quilts made in the state and how they changed or remained the same over time. Although several articles (Stonuey and Crews 1989; Shea and Crews 1990; Crews and James 1996) and a book (Crews and Naugle 1991) about Nebraska quilts and quiltmakers have been published, a comprehensive summary and quantitative analysis of the quilt-related data collected at all sites during the Nebraska Quilt Project (NQP) remains to be published. This study examines data collected at **all** NQP sites, including the initial thirteen-site, non-metropolitan survey, plus seven Lincoln sites and five Omaha sites which were not included in any previous study. In addition, we summarize and analyze data on Nebraska quilts made after 1940, as well as re-examine data regarding quilts made in Nebraska prior to 1940 with incorporation of additional data from the metropolitan sites.

This study also seeks to compare Nebraska quilts to quilts of other states to provide perspectives on state and regional differences or similarities. Where possible, findings published in 24 books issued at the conclusions of quilt surveys conducted in other states are compared to the Nebraska findings (Arkansas Quilters Guild 1987; Atkins and Tepper 1992; Brackman et al. 1993; Bresenhan and Puentes 1986, 1990; Carter 1987; Clark 1991; Cleveland and Bister 1991; Cochran 1992; Eanes et al. 1988; Elbert and Elbert 1993; Frost and Stevenson 1992; Goldman and Wiebusch 1991; Harnden, Woolbright and Oklahoma Quilt Heritage Project 1990; Havig 1986; Horton and Myers 1986; Holstein and Finley 1992; Lasansky 1985, 1987; Laury and California Heritage Quilt Project 1990; MacDowell and Fitzgerald 1987; Ramsey and Waldvogel 1986; Texas Heritage Quilt Society 1986; Williams 1992).

Method and Procedure

Data Collection and Sample

During twenty-seven Nebraska Quilt History Days held over a two-year period between April 1987 and May 1989, NQP members collected the data used in this study at sites scattered across the state. The selected sites were representative of the geographic, ethnic, and economic diversity of the state. Site selection procedures and the format of each quilt history day are described more fully elsewhere (Stonuey and Crews 1988; Crews and Naugle 1991).

Twenty-one volunteers from the Lincoln Quilters Guild, who comprised the NQP Committee, received training in textile analysis, dating of quilts, and fieldwork techniques. Specifically, they attended three full-day workshops on fiber and fabric analysis conducted by Patricia Crews, Associate Professor, University of Nebraska–Lincoln. In addition, they attended sessions conducted by Katy Christopherson of Louisville, Kentucky, and Laurel Horton of Seneca, South Carolina, who shared insights and advice from experiences with their respective state quilt projects. Barbara Brackman and Suellen Meyer conducted workshops on the dating of quilts. Finally, NQP committee members attended additional training sessions on photography and oral interviewing techniques which are described elsewhere (Crews and Naugle 1991). With this intensive training, NQP committee members became the field workers for the state survey. Some of the NQP members administered the quiltmaker/quiltowner questionnaires, some photographed the quilts, and some analyzed and completed quilt analysis forms for each quilt registered by NQP.

Although NQP members registered quilts made outside Nebraska if brought into the state prior to 1920, we excluded those quilts from this study of Nebraska-made quilts. The overall sample consisted of 3,738 NQP-registered quilts or tops made in 88 of Nebraska's 93 counties between 1870 and 1989. Although the sample was neither randomly nor purposefully selected as recommended by statisticians, we believe that it was large enough and sufficiently comprehensive, both temporally and geographically, to be representative of the state's quilts. Consequently, we believe that reliable generalizations can be made on the basis of the sample.

Instrument and Data Analysis

Information contained in NQP quilt-analysis forms and quiltmaker/quiltowner questionnaires provided the data for this study. Data extracted from the quilt-analysis forms included numbers of quilts registered for each decade, types of quilts made, most prevalent patterns used in pieced and appliqued quilts, quilting method (hand or machine), average number of quilting stitches per inch, date inscribed (yes or no), quilting patterns used, fiber content, and average length and width. Information garnered from the quiltmaker/quiltowner questionnaires consisted primarily of who made and who quilted the quilts—an individual or a group—and whether or not the quilter(s) was hired.

For purposes of data entry and summarization, the slides of all quilts photographed at each site were viewed. A corresponding pattern number from Barbara Brackman's *Encyclopedia of Pieced Quilt Patterns* (1984) was assigned to each pieced quilt; a corresponding pattern number from Judy Rehmel's *Key to 1,000 Applique Quilt Patterns* (1984) was assigned to each applique quilt; and additional numeric categories were created for other types of quilts like embroidered and crazy quilts. To ensure consistency only two scholars viewed all quilts and assigned the pattern numbers: Joseph Stonuey and Kari Ronning. Joseph Stonuey was a graduate student in the Department of Textiles, Clothing and Design at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln whose research focused on Nebraska-made quilts. Dr. Kari Ronning was a NQP committee member and quilt scholar who has published articles in *Uncoverings* and other quilt-related publications (e.g., Ronning 1991).

The number entered as the date a quilt was made was the date, decade, or mid-point in a quarter century assigned by a NQP member on the quilt-analysis form **if** it was in agreement with the date given by the quiltmaker and/or owner on the questionnaire. If the two dates were not in agreement, the questionnaire was re-examined for other clues and the slide of the quilt was viewed again when necessary. When quiltmakers or quiltowners noted how or why a date was given and their reason was sufficiently convincing (i.e., quilt was made for a wedding or a birth), we used the date given by the maker/owner instead of the NQP member's assigned date.

We based the calculations of frequencies and percentages on total numbers of responses for a given category, not on total numbers of Nebraska-made quilts registered for a decade. Because portions of quilt analysis forms were sometimes left blank, the total numbers (n) of quilts indicated vary somewhat in the tables that follow.

Findings and Discussion

Quilt Production

The numbers of quilts made by Nebraskans and registered for each decade from 1870 to 1980 reflect the passage of time, and the waxing and waning of quilting interest in Nebraska. As shown in Table 1, NQP committee members registered fewer quilts made in Nebraska for the decades of the nineteenth century than for any of the decades of the twentieth century. This finding was not surprising, because we expected fewer older quilts to have survived the trials of time and usage. Additionally, quilting

TABLE 1
NUMBER AND TYPES OF NEBRASKA-MADE QUILTS REGISTERED IN NQP SURVEY

	1870 n=13	1880 n=50	1890 n=71	1900 n=133	1910 n=142	1920 n=308	1930 n=656	1940 n=260	1950 n=230	1960 n=208	1970 n=450	1980 n=1217
Pieced, %	84.6	76.0	66.2	67.7	76.8	63.3	66.9	68.8	55.2	61.5	52.0	50.5
Applique, %	15.4	6.0	2.8	3.8	2.1	10.1	15.7	14.2	21.8	14.4	15.1	14.1
Embroidered, %		2.0	1.4	4.5	4.2	15.2	13.3	12.7	15.2	14.9	19.8	13.5
Sampler, %			1.4		0.7	1.6	1.1	1.5	0.4		6.9	11.3
Crazy, %		16.0	25.3	23.3	14.2	6.2	1.1	1.2	3.5	2.9	2.0	1.2
Unique/Original, %					0.7	0.3	0.1	0.4	0.4	1.0	3.3	6.2
Whole Cloth, %			2.8	0.7	0.7	3.2	1.4	1.2	3.1	3.9	0.9	2.8
Undetermined, %					0.7		0.5		0.4	1.4		0.4

declined nationwide during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Woodard and Greenstein 1988), so it appears that quilting activity in Nebraska also reflected national trends.

NQP members registered more quilts dating from the 1930s ($n=656$) than from any other decade before the 1980s. Considering the fact that 50 to 60 years had passed since some of the 1930s quilts were made, this figure was even more impressive. It was not totally unexpected, however, since by the 1920s and 1930s the first quilt revival of the twentieth century was well established (Benberry 1979; Woodard and Greenstein 1988). In their study of quilts entered in needlework competitions at Nebraska State Fairs, Furgason and Crews (1993) noted that the large number of entries showed tremendous interest in quilting in Nebraska during the 1930s. For example, Nebraskans entered 217 quilts in the State Fair in 1931, compared to as few as 16 quilts during some years of the 1950s.

A host of factors contributed to the resurgence of quilting during the 1920s and 1930s. In Nebraska and elsewhere in the nation, printed media fueled a passion for quilts via magazine articles and newspaper patterns; department store promotions increased as retailers discovered how lucrative selling fabrics to quilters could be; and programs sponsored by the WPA (Works Progress Administration) encouraged arts and crafts including quilting (Benberry 1979; Orlofsky and Orlofsky 1974; Stehlik 1991; Woodard and Greenstein 1988). The Kansas Quilt Project also reported a large number of quilts made in this period. According to Barbara Brackman (1993: 43), "Quilts made between 1925 and 1950 account for one-third of all quilts recorded by the KQP."

NQP members registered less than half as many quilts made during the 1950s ($n=230$) and 1960s ($n=208$) as made during the 1930s ($n=656$). Although quilting and quilting did not die out in rural America after World War II, Nebraska quilters, like women in many parts of the country, showed less interest in quilting during the 1950s and 1960s than they had in previous decades (Brackman et al. 1993; Bresenhan and Puentes 1990; Yabsley 1984). However, some Nebraska quilters, like nationally-known Grace McCance Snyder and Ernest B. Haight, continued to quilt. Their example encouraged others when Nebraskans began to show a renewed interest in quilting in the early 1970s. According to Kari Ronning (1991:167) quilting in Nebraska "was kept alive [during the 1950s and 1960s] mainly by church quilting groups and by quilters who had established their skill in the . . . revival of the 1920s and 1930s."

The smaller number of quilts made in Kansas during the 1950s also was noted by the Kansas Quilt Project (Brackman 1993). However, according to

Brackman (1993:55), "The KQP saw an increase in quilting that began around 1960. The number of dated quilts in the 1960s was double that of the 1950s." By contrast, quilt production in Nebraska did not begin to increase markedly until the 1970s.

NQP committee members registered more quilts made during the 1980s ($n=1217$) than in any other decade, reflecting the resurgence of interest in quilting that occurred nationwide during this period. This most recent revival which began in the early 1970s—or according to Brackman (1993) and Lasansky (1987) possibly the late 1960s—has resulted in the production of unprecedented numbers of Nebraska quilts during the 1980s. Ricky Clark (1991:163) noted that "revivals often occur during times of social stress, when people find comfort in a selectively remembered past." The farm crisis of the 1980s was certainly a stressful period for rural Nebraskans—a time marked by the loss of family farms, by bankruptcies, foreclosures, divorce and the breakdown of traditional families, and by the loss of friends and neighbors when, overwhelmed by grief and despair, some farmers committed suicide. The emotional value of quilts—symbols of a cherished past, symbols of a rural lifestyle, symbols of family and family traditions—may have increased when Nebraskans felt or observed the loss of so many things they held dear, prompting them to participate in quilting in record numbers.

Kari Ronning (1991) and Barbara Brackman (1993) suggested the counterculture spirit of the late 1960s and early 1970s and the related back-to-the-land movement as possible forces that interacted to bring about renewed interest in quilting in Nebraska and Kansas and the rest of the country. Brackman (1993), Bresenhan and Puentes (1990), and Ronning (1991) also credit the feminist movement with encouraging women to demonstrate pride in their heritage by joining in traditional women's activities such as quilting. In addition, Brackman (1993), Gutcheon (1993), Ronning (1991), and Yabsley (1984) credit numerous newspaper and magazine articles and nationally televised programs devoted to quilting with spreading the growing interest in quilting. Bresenhan and Puentes (1990), Gutcheon (1993), Ronning (1991), and Yabsley (1984) agree that the nation's bicentennial in 1976 also gave the quilt revival a strong boost.

Prevalent Quilt Types and Patterns

Pieced quilts outnumbered all other types of Nebraska-made quilts in all decades. About two-thirds of the quilts made in each decade until 1950 were pieced quilts, and at least half of the NQP-registered quilts were pieced

in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Bettina Havig (1987) reported a similar percentage (66.4%) of pieced quilts recorded in the Missouri sample (n=703). Kansas Quilt Project data were entered in such a way that project scholars cannot determine the number of pieced quilts (Brackman et al. 1993:191). Ramsey and Waldvogel (1986) reported that 1,050 (74%) of the 1,425 quilts registered in the Tennessee survey were pieced quilts. North Carolina project scholars (Eanes, et al. 1988:99) estimated that pieced quilts "probably represent 90% of the quilts" made in the state; however data entry and summarization were incomplete at the time of publication of *North Carolina Quilts*. If their estimate is borne out when the North Carolina quilt data are summarized and analyzed, it would appear that women of North Carolina made proportionately more pieced quilts than midwestern women.

The most prevalent patterns found in Nebraska pieced quilts are listed in Table 2 and shown in Figures 1 to 10. The same patterns (or most of them, although not necessarily in the same order) were reported as favored by quiltmakers in Kansas, Indiana, New Jersey, New York, and Tennessee (Brackman et al. 1993; Goldman and Wiebusch 1991; Cochran 1992; Atkins and Tepper 1992; Ramsey and Waldvogel 1986).

The Log Cabin was the most frequently registered pieced-quilt pattern in Nebraska between 1870 and 1919. By contrast, Log Cabins were relatively uncommon in Tennessee (Ramsey and Waldvogel 1986). Only 2.4% of the Tennessee sample of pieced quilts made before 1930 (25 of 1,050) were of this pattern, compared to 7.6% of pieced patterns among Nebraska quilts made between 1870 and 1929.

Also popular between 1870 and 1919 in Nebraska were Four Patch, Nine Patch, Irish Chain, and star patterns. Star patterns were "frequently found in the earlier New Jersey quilts" according to Cochran (1992:47). And, Ramsey and Waldvogel (1986) reported that star patterns were the most abundant designs in Tennessee quilts made before 1930. Atkins and Tepper (1992) also reported that star patterns (single and multiple) were the most favored patterns of New York quiltmakers, but did not publish numbers or percentages of quilts to accompany their statements. (The New York Quilt Project registered all quilts brought to each documentation site regardless of when or where a quilt was made.) Likewise if most favored pattern was calculated on the basis of total number of pieced quilts across all time periods, then stars were the most prevalent patterns overall in Nebraska as well. Star patterns were not, however, the most popular pattern in every decade in Nebraska.

TABLE 2
PREVALENT PIECED-QUILT PATTERNS AMONG NEBRASKA QUILTS

Pattern, Brackman # (top 12)	1870 n=11 (%)	1880 n=38 (%)	1890 n=47 (%)	1900 n=90 (%)	1910 n=109 (%)	1920 n=195 (%)	1930 n=439 (%)	1940 n=178 (%)	1950 n=127 (%)	1960 n=128 (%)	1970 n=234 (%)	1980 n=614 (%)	Overall n=2211 (%)
Grandmother's Flower Garden, 160			4.2			10.3	13.0	14.0	7.1	10.2	7.7	4.7	5.9
Double Wedding Ring, 303					2.7	6.1	12.8	6.7	5.5	3.1	2.6	2.4	3.5
Log Cabin, 2572, 2573, 2576	18.2	10.5	6.4	8.9	9.2	1.5	0.9	1.7	0.8	3.1	3.8	10.4	5.5
Nine Patch, 1601		2.6	4.2	3.3	5.5	7.2	2.7	4.5	2.4	3.9	4.3	2.9	3.6
One Patch/Hit or Miss 2276			2.1		3.7	3.6	3.9	3.4	5.5	1.6	4.5	3.4	2.7
Dresden Plate, 3488						2.6	6.6	5.6	3.9	1.6	2.6	2.1	2.1
Lone Star, 4005		5.3	2.1		2.7	1.5	2.7	2.8	3.1	6.2	4.3	2.1	2.7
Trip around World, 2286, 2293				1.1	0.9	1.5	2.3	1.7		3.9	2.1	3.6	1.4
Irish Chain, 1014, 1019, 2283		5.3	2.1	1.1	0.9	3.1	1.4	2.2	2.4	3.1	3.4	2.4	2.3
Grandmothers Fan, 3305, 3306			2.1	1.1	0.9	1.0	1.8	0.6	2.4	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.2
Four Patch, 1101, 1102, 1103	9.1	7.9		3.3	1.8	1.0	0.1	1.1	1.6	3.1		1.3	1.5
Stars, 3675-3960	9.1	2.6	2.1	5.5	2.7	1.0	2.3	3.4	5.5	6.2	4.3	3.9	4.1
Stars, Large & Small	9.1	7.9	4.2	5.5	5.4	2.5	5.0	6.2	8.6	12.4	8.6	6.0	6.8

Star patterns rose in popularity among pieced quilts made in Nebraska during the 1950s and 1960s. In fact, if Lone Stars were combined with all other star patterns, the frequency of star patterns would actually exceed the frequency of all other patterns for the decades of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s in Nebraska. According to Goldman and Wiebusch (1991:9), authors of *Quilts of Indiana*, "Star patterns, large and small, were by far the most popular of all quilt designs found during the [Indiana] project **regardless of the time frame.**" This was not the case in Nebraska. Log Cabins exceeded or equalled percentages of star patterns for the decades of the 1870s through the 1910s, and Grandmother's Flower Garden exceeded all star patterns combined between 1920 and 1949. The difference may be attributed, in part, to larger numbers of nineteenth-century quilts registered by the Indiana Quilt Registry Project.

During the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, Grandmother's Flower Garden, Double Wedding Ring, Dresden Plate, and Nine Patch became the most prevalent pieced patterns, and they remained among the most prevalent patterns during the 1950s and 1960s. Grandmother's Flower Garden and Double Wedding Ring were very popular patterns of the 1920s and 1930s, encouraged by the availability of printed patterns in newspapers and magazines (Brackman 1989). Nebraskans clearly responded to the fad: among the pieced quilts recorded by the NQP for the 1920s and 1930s, 10.3% and 13.0%, respectively, were made in the Grandmother's Flower Garden pattern. The popularity of these patterns was reported as well by other state projects. For example, the Indiana Quilt Registry Project (Goldman and Wiebusch 1991) reported that Grandmother's Flower Garden was the most popular pattern in the 1930s, followed by Dresden Plate and Double Wedding Ring. The Kansas Quilt Project reported a smaller percentage of Grandmother's Flower Garden for the 1924 to 1950 era than found in Nebraska (Kansas—7% versus Nebraska—12.4%) (Brackman 1993). However, the percentage of Nebraska examples of the pattern was based on pieced quilts only, whereas the Kansas percentage was based on all registered quilts, thereby resulting in a smaller percentage for the Kansas sample.

Another comparison of interest was that in Kansas, Grandmother's Flower Garden "enjoyed a revival in the 1970s and 1980s" according to Brackman (1993:65). That does not appear to be the case in Nebraska. During the 1930s and 1940s, 13.0% and 14.0%, respectively, of quilts recorded by the NQP were made in the Grandmother's Flower Garden pattern, whereas only 7.7% and 4.7% of the 1970s and 1980s Nebraska quilts were made in this pattern. Clearly, unlike Kansas, there was no surge in Nebraska

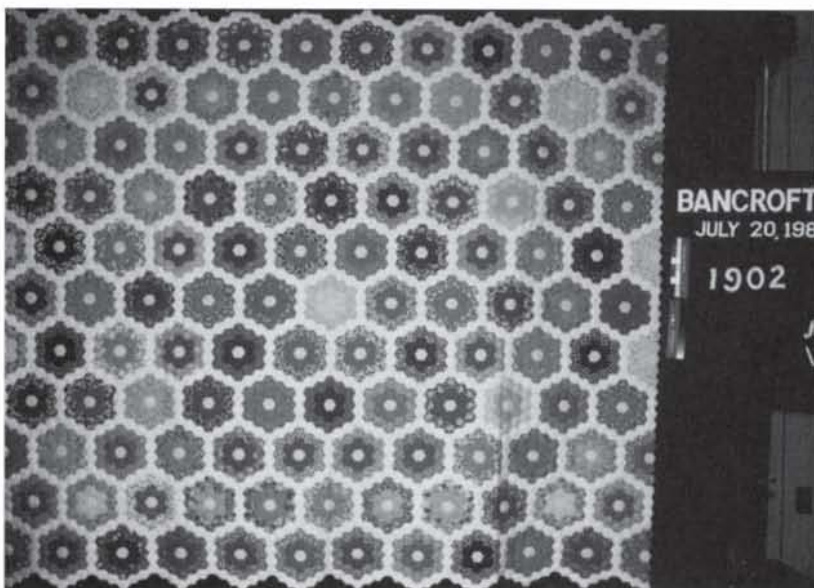


Figure 1. "Grandmother's Flower Garden" quilt made by Elizabeth Wilhelmine Schenk Ross c.1934 in Johnstown, Brown County, Nebraska. NQP #1902.

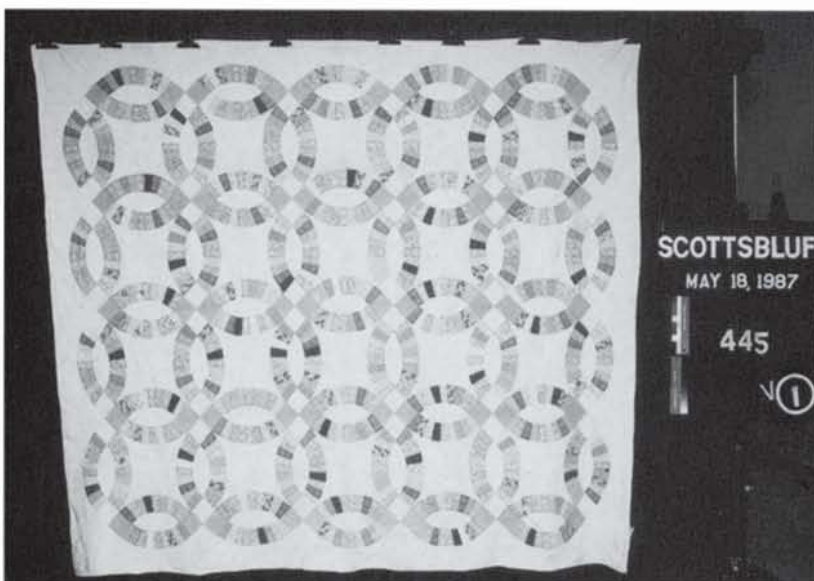


Figure 2. "Double Wedding Ring" quilt made by Katharine Marie Kunz Swarts c.1930 in Alvo, Cass County, Nebraska. NQP #445.

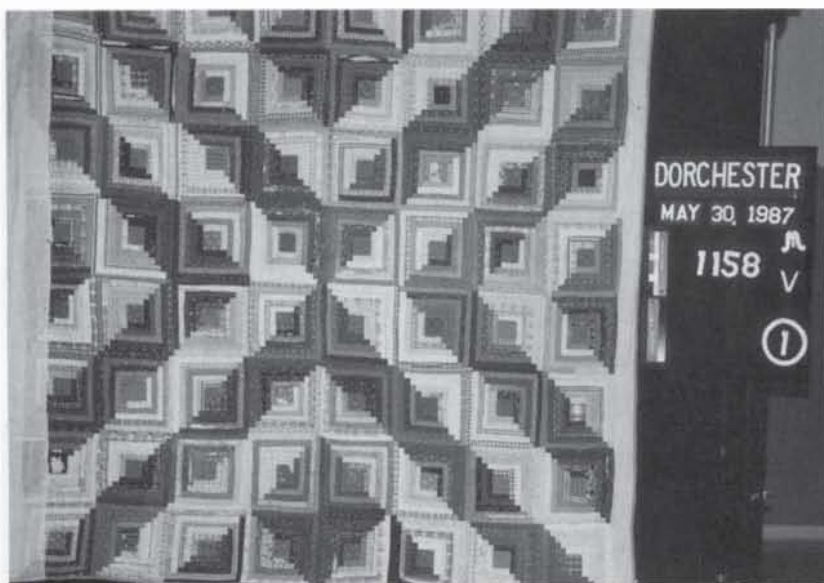


Figure 3. "Log Cabin" quilt made by Sophie Louise Suhr Maier c.1935 near Staplehurst, Seward County, Nebraska. NQP #1158.

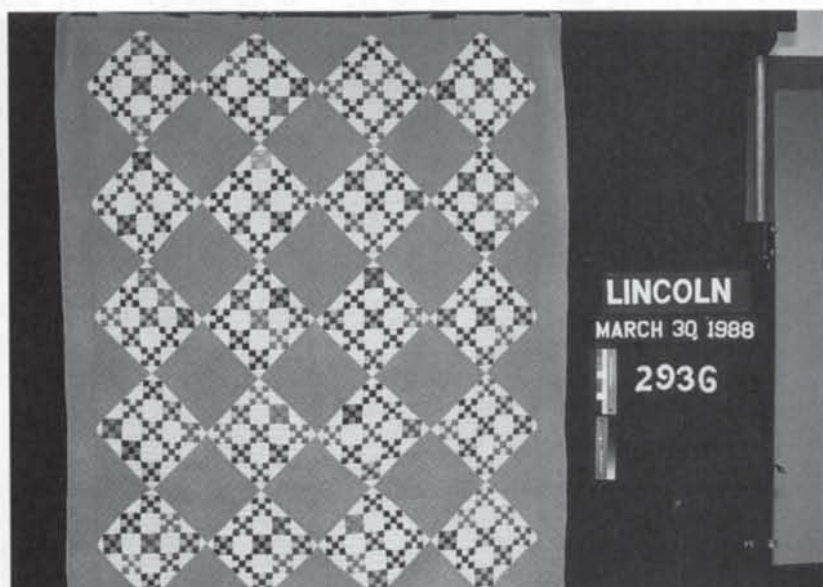


Figure 4. "Nine Patch" quilt top pieced by Sadie Bernard and quilted by her sister, Anna Bernard, in 1897 in Imperial, Chase County, Nebraska. NQP #2936.

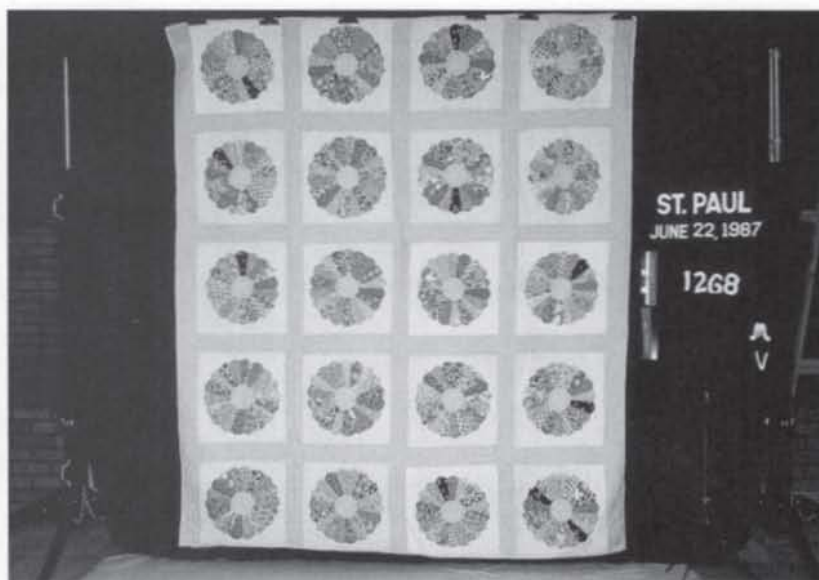


Figure 5. "Dresden Plate" quilt made by Della Hyacinth Fuehrer Zamzow c.1930 in Grand Island, Hall County, Nebraska. NQP #1268.



Figure 6. "Lone Star" quilt made by Mary Ann Eicher Stauffer in 1932 (dated) in Milford, Seward County, Nebraska. NQP #815.

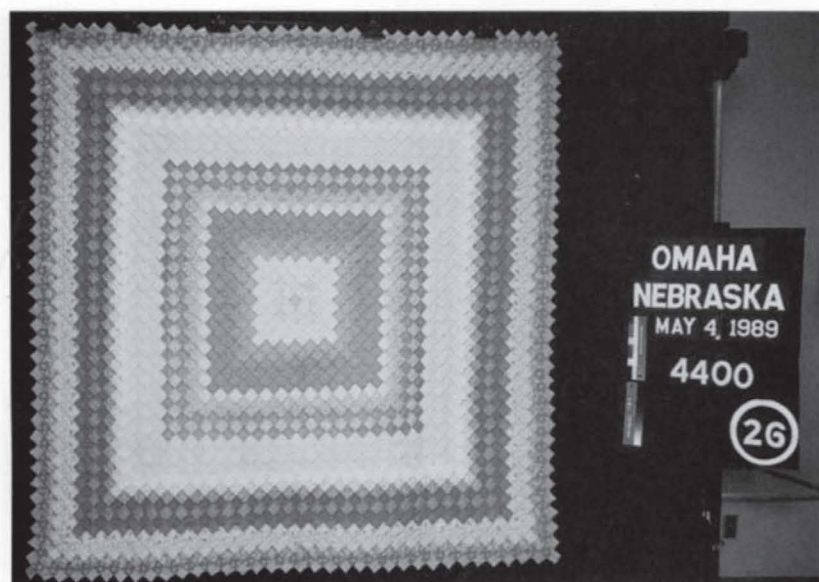


Figure 7. "Trip Around the World" quilt made by Beverly Dale Kostenuik Canterbury in 1988 in Papillion, Sarpy County, Nebraska. It is a replica of a 1940s quilt made by her husband's grandmother. NQP #4400.

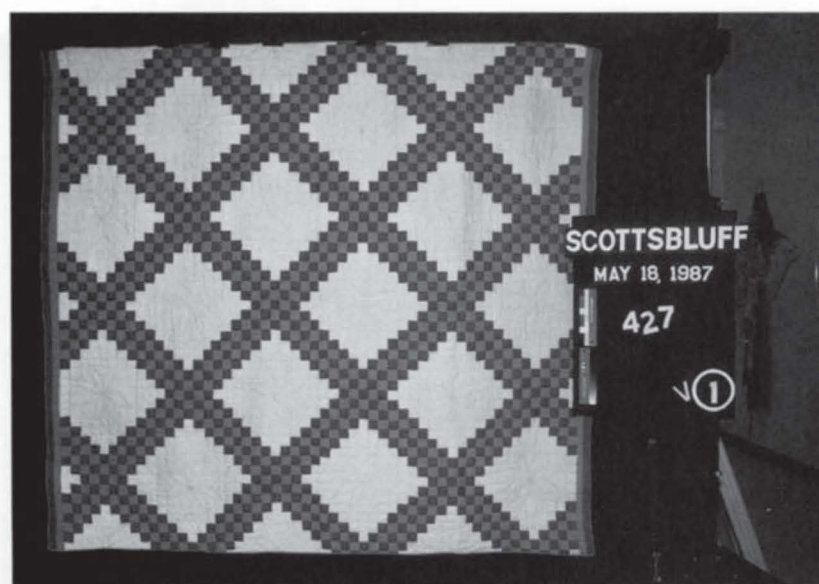


Figure 8. "Double Irish Chain" quilt made by Ina S. Wilson Baker in 1918 as a wedding gift for her son and his bride. The quilt was made in Salem, Richardson County, Nebraska. NQP #427.

in percentage of quilts made in the Grandmother's Flower Garden pattern during the 1970s and 1980s. The reason for this difference in neighboring Great Plains states is unclear.

The most popular pieced pattern among Nebraska-made quilts of the 1980s was the Log Cabin. In fact, more Log Cabins (10.4%) were made during the 1980s than any decade since the 1870s when they were a fad quilt style. The popularity of Log Cabins in Nebraska reflects the "major and sustained revival (nationwide) amongst contemporary quiltmakers" of the Log Cabin pattern noted by Lasansky (1987:86).

It is interesting to note that the popular pieced quilt patterns among Nebraska quiltmakers of the 1970s and 1980s remain the traditional ones popular in previous periods including the Log Cabin, Grandmother's Flower Garden, Four Patch, Nine Patch, and star patterns. Clearly, many contemporary Nebraska quiltmakers remain traditionalists; the Kansas Quilt Project noted a similar tendency among Kansas quiltmakers (Brackman 1993).

Nebraskans made many crazy quilts during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In fact 25.3% of the Nebraska-made quilts attributed to the 1890s were crazy quilts. American crazy quilts, made of "pieces of cloth of various colors and irregular shapes and sizes," usually were of silk and lavishly embellished with embroidery (McMorris 1984:9). In Nebraska many crazy quilts were made of silk fabric, and heavily embroidered, but many also were made of cotton or wool and featured little or no embroidery. By the 1920s and for the remainder of the twentieth century, far fewer crazy quilts were made in Nebraska and throughout the nation; the Victorian fad had passed.

A high incidence of crazy quilts was reported by Havig (1987) for the Missouri Heritage Quilt Project (9.7% of all Missouri quilts versus 5% of all Nebraska-made quilts) and by Brackman (1993) for the Kansas Quilt Project (9.3% of Kansas quilts made between 1880 and 1925 versus 17% of Nebraska quilts made between 1880 and 1929). It is unclear why Missouri recorded a larger percentage of crazy quilts and Kansas a smaller percentage than Nebraska. It may simply be an anomaly of the samples.

Appliqued quilts accounted for about 15% of the quilts made after 1920, while less than 6% of the quilts made prior to 1920 (except during the 1870s) were of that type. Appliqued quilts were rare in Nebraska as they were in Kansas (Brackman 1993), North Carolina (Eanes et al. 1988), and nationwide during the first quarter of the twentieth century (Brackman 1989). Because so few Nebraska-made applique quilts were registered by NQP before 1920, none of the popular patterns for nineteenth-century red

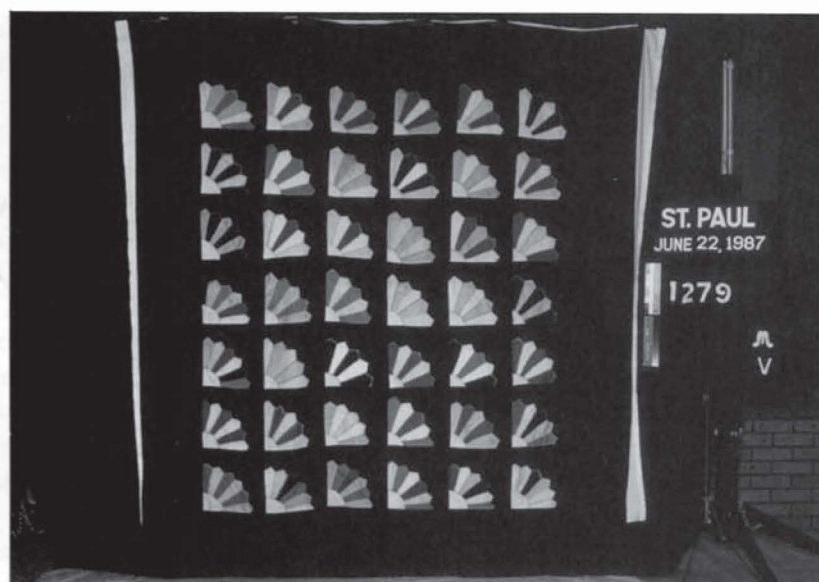


Figure 9. "Fan" quilt made by Emma Glines c.1910 and quilted by Minnie Glines, her sister, c.1942 in Cushing, Howard County, Nebraska. NQP #1279.

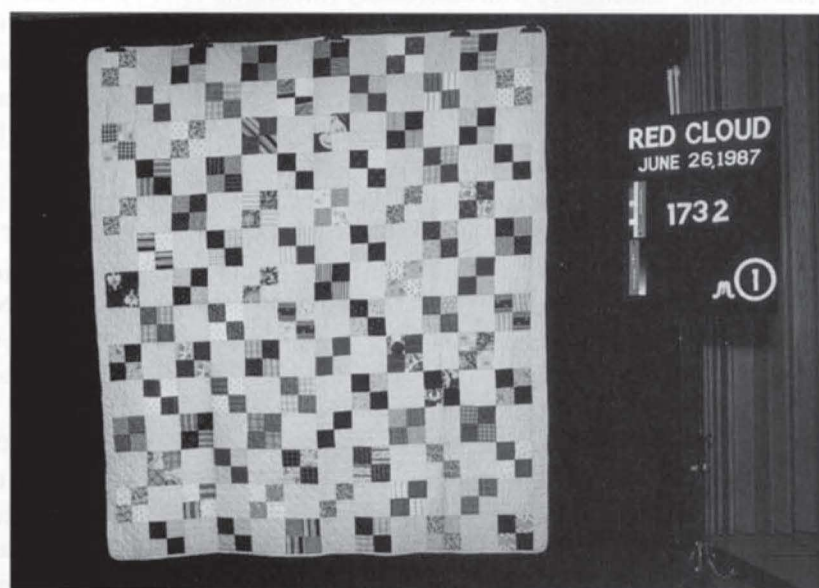


Figure 10. "Four Patch." Quilt top made by Frances E. Falley Baker circa 1890. Quilted by her grand-daughter, Hester Karr Schulz, c.1930. Quilt top is believed to have been made in or near Grand Island, Hall County, Nebraska. NQP #1732.

and green applique quilts like Whig Rose and Princess Feather appeared among the top ten applique patterns for Nebraska quilts. In fact, only 34 nineteenth-century red and green applique quilts were registered by NQP and only eight reportedly were made in Nebraska. The remaining NQP-registered nineteenth-century applique quilts were made in states where they were popular in the period prior to the settlement of Nebraska—Iowa (n=5), Illinois (n=3), New York (n=1), Ohio (n=1), Pennsylvania (n=3), Virginia (n=1), Wisconsin (n=1), and state unknown (n=11). Two of the 34 quilts, although constructed in patterns typical of nineteenth-century red and green applique quilts, were constructed of indigo blue-colored fabrics rather than red and green calicos. Both quilts are pictured in *Nebraska Quilts and Quiltmakers* (Crews and Naugle 1991).

The most prevalent applique patterns are shown in Table 3. Sunbonnet Sue was the most popular applique pattern for many decades of the twentieth century (1900, 1910, 1930, 1950, 1960, and 1970). According to Woodard and Greenstein (1988), the Sunbonnet Sue figure dates back to the 1870s when Kate Greenaway's illustrations on greeting cards and countless books became popular. In the United States the figure with a bonnet-shrouded face was impressed on the national consciousness by the widespread adoption of *The Sunbonnet Babies Primer*, illustrated by Bertha L. Corbett and published by Rand, McNally in 1902 (Grover 1902). Woodard and Greenstein (1988:31) note that, "From that point until the 1930s, 1,300,000 first graders learned to read from these primers adorned with amply bonnetted little girls." According to Brackman (1989:155), "By 1912, the *Ladies Home Journal* was showing an appliqued pastel Sunbonnet Sue quilt and advising a mother to make one out of scraps from her daughter's dresses. Like several other early twentieth-century design innovations, appliqued Sunbonnet children (also called Dutch Dolls) didn't really catch on until the 1925-1950 era when they became one of the fad designs." The making of Sunbonnet Sue quilts began at an early date among Nebraska quiltmakers; the earliest Sunbonnet Sue quilt registered by the NQP was a crib quilt made in 1902 for the quiltmaker's baby daughter.

Other popular applique quilt patterns among Nebraska quilters of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s were butterflies and Colonial Lady. Brackman (1989) noted the popularity of butterflies and Colonial Lady among American quilts from 1925 to 1950.

Embroidered quilts in similar percentages to applique quilts represented the next most prevalent quilt type in Nebraska for almost all periods. The category of embroidered quilts comprised both pieced quilts composed

of embroidered squares, as well as whole-cloth embroidered tops. Embroidered quilts surged in popularity among Nebraskans during the 1920s, as they did nationwide (Brackman 1989; Atkins and Tepper 1992). Embroidered quilts remained popular in Nebraska throughout the twentieth century. Brackman (1993:46-47) attributes the rise in popularity of embroidered quilts to "both an improvement in colorfastness of cotton embroidery thread and of the marketing of stamped squares." According to Atkins and Tepper (1992:131), "Square blocks of muslin stamped with designs for embroidery stitching (usually meant to be done in a chain or outline stitch) could be bought for a penny—complete with enough floss to complete the square. . . . When enough blocks had been purchased and embroidered, they would be sewn together, with or without sashing."

In addition to pre-stamped squares of muslin, quilters of the 1920s and 1930s could also trace embroidery patterns published as a series in their local newspapers. Stehlik (1991), who analyzed the quilt-related endeavors of the *Omaha World-Herald*, concludes that the daily newspaper played an influential role during the 1920s and 1930s in disseminating quilting patterns and encouraging quilting throughout Nebraska by sponsoring quilt contests. The *Omaha World-Herald* (the largest daily newspaper in Nebraska) introduced its first series of embroidered quilt patterns in 1921, joining its counterparts in other states (Stehlik 1991). Over the next two decades the *World-Herald* introduced more than fifteen series of embroidered quilt patterns including "Colonial History," "Bible History," "State Birds and Flowers," "Nursery Rhyme," and "Covered Wagon States" series (Stehlik 1991). Most embroidered quilts registered by the NQP and attributed to the 1920s and 1930s were of the embroidered-square type and many featured embroidered designs based on the *World-Herald* patterns.

Sampler quilts (quilts made up of a variety of different pieced and/or appliqued pattern blocks) rose in popularity among American quilters during the 1970s and 1980s; 11.4% of the Nebraska quilts made in the 1980s were samplers. Many women who undertook quilting during the 1970s and 1980s made sampler quilts for the purpose of learning to quilt. In addition, sampler quilts were promoted and frequently pictured in the many quilt-related publications of the late 1970s and 1980s.

Very few whole cloth quilts were made in Nebraska in any period. Likewise very few "unique" quilts were registered. "Unique" quilts for the purposes of this study were those quilts made in a combination of techniques including piecing, applique, embroidery, and painting. Frequently, quilts considered "unique" were made to commemorate centennials or special

TABLE 3
PREVALENT APPLIQUE-QUILT PATTERNS AMONG NEBRASKA QUILTS

Applique Patterns (Top 10 overall)	1870 n=2 (%)	1880 n=3 (%)	1890 n=2 (%)	1900 n=4 (%)	1910 n=3 (%)	1920 n=31 (%)	1930 n=104 (%)	1940 n=37 (%)	1950 n=50 (%)	1960 n=30 (%)	1970 n=68 (%)	1980 n=172 (%)
Sunbonnet Sue				25.0	33.3	6.4	20.2	10.8	14.0	10.0	7.3	2.3
Butterflies				25.0		6.4	15.5	10.8	10.0	3.3	2.9	2.3
Colonial Lady						3.2	4.8	10.8	2.0		1.5	1.7
Triple Tulip						6.4	3.9	2.7				0.6
Maple Leaf									4.0	6.6	2.9	1.2
Friendship Dahlia						6.4	2.9	2.7				0.6
Pansy							1.0		2.0	6.6		1.2
Rose						6.4	1.9	2.7				0.6
Overall Boy						3.2			6.0		1.5	
Wreath							1.9		2.0	3.3		0.6

Note: Sunbonnet Sue includes Rhemel numbers 722, 725, 731, 733, 739, 749, 750, 754.
 Butterflies includes Rhemel numbers 838, 845, 848, 849, 850, 853, 855, 861, 863.
 Colonial Lady includes Rhemel numbers 703, 717, 718, 720.
 Triple Tulip includes numbers 275, 277, 279, 283, 287, 289.
 Maple Leaf includes Rhemel number 13.
 Friendship Dahlia includes Rhemel numbers 183, 185.
 Pansy includes Rhemel numbers 202, 216, 217.
 Rose includes Rhemel numbers 519, 522, 532, 538.
 Overall Boy includes Rhemel numbers 734, 738, 746, 747.
 Wreath includes Rhemel numbers 443, 446, 463.

events in various Nebraska towns. This quilt type was most prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s, reflecting the United States Bicentennial fad for nostalgic mementos to mark this important national event.

Quilts made of remnants from local factories were rare among Nebraska quilts because there are very few textile or apparel factories in Nebraska. NQP members registered a few quilts made of lingerie fabrics from a Formfit factory in Crete, Nebraska. By contrast, North Carolina project scholars noted that "localized quilt types sometimes developed as a result of the availability of free or inexpensive materials from the textile mills. . . . After the mills diversified their products in the early twentieth century, rayon products, drapery fabrics, upholstery brocades and velvets, and knitted materials such as T-shirt scraps appeared in (North Carolina) quilts" (Eanes et al. 1988:33, 35). Cochran (1992:161) also mentioned that New Jersey quiltmakers of the era 1925 to 1950 had a particular inclination "to use scraps and other remnants from local factories that made pajamas, aprons, and lingerie." Such was not the case in Nebraska.

Quilting Practices

Most Nebraska-made quilts registered by the NQP were hand quilted, rather than tied or machine quilted, as indicated in Table 4. Only during the late 1800s when crazy quilts were the rage, were substantial percentages of quilts tied or joined together by some method other than quilting. Except during the 1950s and 1960s, over 90% of the NQP-registered quilts made in Nebraska were hand quilted. Hand quilting prevailed even during the 1950s and 1960s when 86.4% and 83.7%, respectively, of the quilts of those decades were hand quilted.

Following World War II all sorts of technology was adopted for the home, the farm, and industry. The use of the sewing machine to more efficiently quilt the quilts would have seemed very natural at the time. However, with the renewed interest in all things hand made during the 1970s, machine quilting declined from highs of 13.6% in the 1950s and 15.2% in the 1960s, to lows of 5.3% in the 1970s among Nebraska-made quilts. The use of machine quilting by Ernest Haight, a prolific Nebraska quiltmaker who promoted machine quilting in his booklet entitled *Practical Machine-Quilting for the Homemaker*, may have contributed to the high percentage of machine-quilted quilts during the 1950s and 1960s.

The number of quilting stitches per inch measured on Nebraska-made quilts ranged from 4 to 20; however, the average number was 6 to 7. The

TABLE 4
QUILTING PRACTICES OBSERVED IN NEBRASKA QUILTS

Quilted or Tied?	1870 n=12	1880 n=49	1890 n=65	1900 n=113	1910 n=124	1920 n=280	1930 n=625	1940 n=249	1950 n=222	1960 n=205	1970 n=439	1980 n=1197
Quilted, %	91.7	73.5	70.8	70.8	78.2	81.8	88.5	92.0	92.8	90.2	92.9	87.5
Unquilted top, %	8.3	8.2	9.2	7.1	10.5	6.8	7.0	4.0	4.0	7.8	3.9	7.5
Backed--Tied or Other ¹ , %		18.4	20.0	22.1	11.3	11.4	4.5	4.0	3.1	1.9	3.2	4.9
Quilting Method?	n=10	n=22	n=24	n=39	n=42	n=112	n=303	n=107	n=88	n=92	n=207	n=585
Hand, %	100.0	95.4	100.0	97.4	100.0	95.5	94.7	92.5	86.4	83.7	94.7	90.7
Machine, %		4.6		3.6		4.5	5.3	6.5	13.6	15.2	5.3	7.3
Hand & Machine, %								0.9		1.1		1.9
No. Stitches/Inch?	n=10	n=20	n=24	n=37	n=42	n=107	n=284	n=101	n=77	n=74	n=192	n=519
Average/Inch ²	6.7	6.1	7.4	6.0	6.4	6.5	6.6	6.6	6.3	6.4	6.5	6.3
Date Inscribed?	n=13	n=50	n=71	n=133	n=142	n=308	n=656	n=260	n=230	n=208	n=450	n=1217
Yes, %	15.4	8.0	11.3	7.5	9.1	8.8	6.7	4.2	5.2	8.2	23.1	25.7

¹Most quilts in this category were tied. Some quilts (usually crazy quilts) were backed and the top and back were joined by tacking stitches; consequently, they were neither quilted nor tied.

²Measurements were made in three places on each quilt, averaged, and one number entered on NQP quilt analysis forms.

average number of quilting stitches per inch by decade did not vary much across time, remaining about 6.5 per inch from 1870 until the present. While a larger number of stitches per inch might have been expected in the nineteenth century quilts, it must be remembered that most quilts with an exceptional number of stitches per inch were made in the first half of the nineteenth century, not after the 1870s when Nebraska was settled.

Comparing these findings with our Kansas neighbors, it was initially surprising to note that the Kansas Quilt Project found a higher average number of stitches per inch—between 7 and 8 (Brackman et al. 1993:191). However, the explanation probably again rests in the sample; the Kansas sample contained many more pre-1900 quilts because they included **all** registered quilts, not just those quilts made in Kansas, when calculating the average number of stitches. Lasansky (1986) reported that stitches per inch ranged from 5 to 13 on central Pennsylvania quilts; 7 to 8 stitches per inch were the norm on pieced quilts of dark figured fabrics, while 9 or more were commonly seen on white quilts. Again, the higher average number of stitches found in Pennsylvania quilts than Nebraska quilts may be attributed to the greater number of nineteenth-century quilts included in the central Pennsylvania study.

Less than 10% of the NQP-registered quilts made after 1900 and before 1970 were date inscribed. The percentages ranged from as low as 4.2% for the 1940s, to 8.2% for the 1960s. The number of quilts bearing a date surged in the 1970s and 1980s to over 20%. Contemporary quiltmakers increasingly have become aware of the importance of recording information about their quilts, an awareness fostered by quilt programs, newsletter articles, and numerous state-wide quilt surveys. This likely influenced the increase in percentage of quiltmakers of the 1980s (25.7%) marking the date on their quilts. Also of note was the percentage (15.4%) of 1870s Nebraska-made quilts that were date inscribed. Perhaps, the presence of a marked date on an 1870s quilt increased the likelihood that it would be carefully handled and preserved by succeeding generations of a quiltmaker's family.

Bettina Havig (1987) reported that relatively few (6.28%) of the Missouri-made quilts registered at quilt days bore a date or signature. Considering that most (69%) of the Missouri sample consisted of pre-1900 quilts, it appears that more Nebraska-made quilts bore dates (11.1% overall and 11.5% of the pre-1900 quilts) than did Missouri-made quilts.

Nebraska and Kansas (Brackman 1993) registered the same number (14) of dated quilts for the years 1870 through 1899. Overall Kansas found fewer than 10% of the quilts in their survey had dates inscribed on them

TABLE 5
PREVALENT QUILTING PATTERNS AMONG NEBRASKA QUILTS

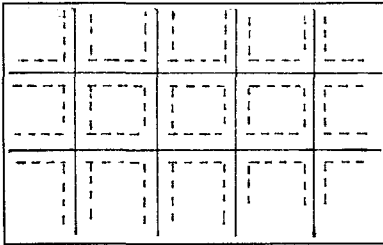
Quilting Patterns (Top 10)	1870 n = 10	1880 n = 21	1890 n = 23	1900 n = 38	1910 n = 43	1920 n = 112	1930 n = 305	1940 n = 108	1950 n = 80	1960 n = 85	1970 n = 208	1980 n = 568
Outline, %	30.0	9.5	34.8	36.8	34.9	44.6	55.7	60.2	55.0	63.5	63.0	60.7
Parallel, %	60.0	52.4	43.5	47.4	41.9	37.5	22.9	20.4	26.2	27.0	28.8	29.2
Crosshatch ¹ , %	40.0	47.6	65.2	31.6	44.1	44.6	41.3	26.8	38.7	42.3	28.3	25.0
Representational ² , %	10.0	23.8	4.3	15.8	2.3	19.6	26.6	20.4	20.0	16.5	21.1	24.3
Cable, %			4.3	2.6	4.6	17.9	13.4	18.5	8.7	10.6	12.5	14.1
In Ditch, %	10.0	4.8	8.7		4.6	2.7	4.3	4.6	3.7	1.2	8.2	20.1
Feather, %	10.0	9.5	8.7	5.3	9.3	3.6	5.6	6.5	6.2	14.1	12.0	9.1
Hearts, %			4.3	2.6	7.0	1.8	2.0	1.8			6.2	12.1
Fan ³ , %		4.8	4.3	8.3	9.3	4.5	3.6	4.6	10.0	2.3	2.4	3.2
Echo, %			4.3		2.3	1.8	2.9	7.4	5.0	3.5	4.8	4.4

¹This includes the variation called hanging diamonds.

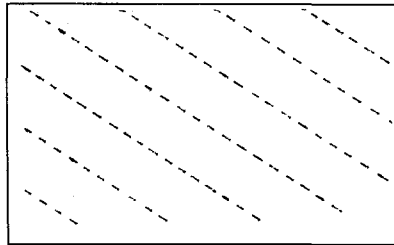
²Quilting in figurative patterns like grapes, eagles, birds, etc.

³This pattern is also called running shell.

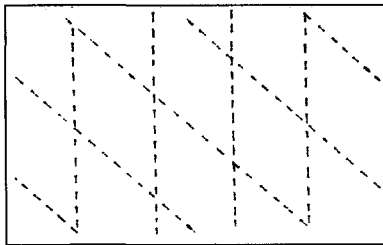
Note: NQP members marked all quilting patterns observed on a quilt; therefore columns do not total to 100 percent.



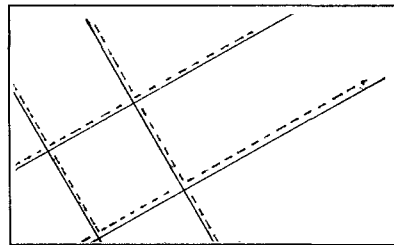
OUTLINE. Traditionally $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the seam on one or both sides of a seam in a pieced or appliqued block.



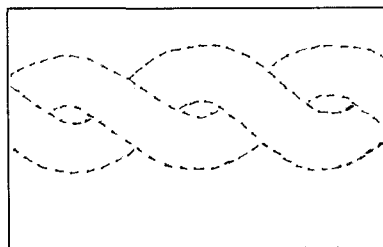
PARALLEL



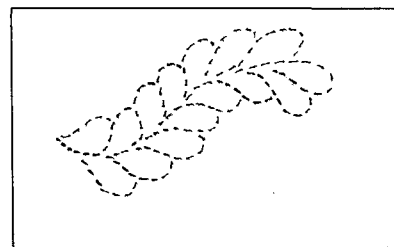
CROSSHATCHING. Intersecting series of parallel lines, includes hanging diamond.



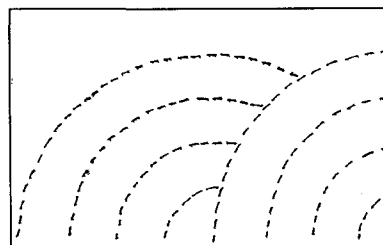
IN THE DITCH. Quilting in the seam joining two pieces of fabric.



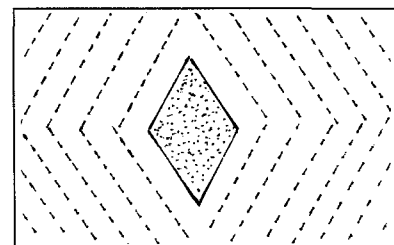
CABLE



FEATHER



FAN



ECHO. Repeated rows of quilting stitches that follow the general outline of a pieced or applique pattern.

Figure 11. The most prevalent quilting patterns found in Nebraska quilts.

(Brackman 1990). By contrast, Erickson (1992) reported that signatures and inscriptions were abundant in quilts registered by The Heritage Quilt Project of New Jersey; however, no numbers or percentages were reported.

Prevalent Quilting Patterns

As indicated in Table 5, the majority of NQP-registered quilts made in Nebraska during the 1870s and 1880s were quilted in parallel lines (60% and 52.4%, respectively). The most prevalent quilting patterns are illustrated in Figure 11. Cross hatching was the next most frequently executed quilting pattern during those decades. Both of these patterns are fairly simple to execute since they are comprised of straight lines. Simple quilting designs like straight line and outline also were observed frequently in New Jersey quilts (Erickson 1992), one of the few state projects to comment on quilting patterns observed in the quilts registered in their survey.

Outline quilting became the most prevalent quilting pattern during the decades of the 1930s through the 1980s. More than 50% of all quilts registered for those decades were quilted, at least in part, in outline quilting. Also popular were parallel lines, cross hatching, and representational patterns like animals, bells, hearts, and other shapes that echoed shapes in the quilt top. Demanding and time-consuming feather patterns were observed on more quilts (14.1%) of the 1960s than any other decade, while cable patterns rose in popularity during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s when 17.9%, 13.4% and 18.5%, respectively, of registered quilts contained areas of quilted cables. The first twentieth-century revival of interest in fine quilting may explain the increased usage of more complex and time-consuming quilting patterns in the 1930s and 1940s. In the second quilt revival of the twentieth century, cable quilting again rose in popularity. During the 1970s and 1980s, 12.5% and 14.1%, respectively, of the quilts contained quilted cables. Examples of swag, teacup, ribbon, rope, and stipple quilting were observed in less than 1.5% of Nebraska-made quilts during any decade.

Conclusions

This study of quilts made in Nebraska spanned the years from the early Euro-American settlement of the state through the farm crisis of the 1980s. Particularly striking were the numbers of quilts made in Nebraska during the 1970s and 1980s. The numbers of quilts made during recent decades indicate

that Nebraskans were and still are very active participants in the most extensive revival of quilting in American history.

The descriptive profile that emerged from this study confirms the many similarities of Nebraska quilts with American quilts of the same periods; it shows how Nebraska quilts reflected the technological, artistic, and social trends of the times; and it points to changes over the years in popularity of quilt types, pieced and applique patterns, and quilting generally. Although distinctive quilt types, styles or practices were reported in other states, including New Jersey, North Carolina and Pennsylvania (Cochran 1992; Eanes et al. 1988; Lasansky 1986; Lasansky 1987), Nebraska quilts are notable for their conservative character, the absence of exceptional qualities, and their tendency to reliably reflect national trends in quilting.

Quantitative summaries and analyses of a state's quilts are important because they provide the necessary basis for comparisons of one state's quilts with those from other states and regions. Descriptive state profiles are necessary beginnings in the effort to identify regional similarities and differences in American quilts. Although at least 22 states have published books based on the information garnered during their state quilt surveys, only a few states (Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska) have published books or articles with supporting data. The limited number of states that have quantified their findings severely hampered our ability to draw comparisons and to identify state and regional differences and similarities. Hopefully, more scholars associated with other quilt projects will enter their findings on a computer data base, systematically analyze their findings, and develop quantitative profiles of quilts made in their states so that comparisons can be made more clearly and confidently.

We acknowledge, however, that even when published supporting data or quantified findings have become available for other states, we still encountered difficulties in drawing comparisons for a variety of reasons. Some reports included all quilts registered but not necessarily made in a state; others included only quilts confirmed as made in their state. Some state surveys included quilts made up to the present time; others were limited to quilts made before a selected date, generally a decade in the early twentieth century. These differences significantly affected the percentages determined for various aspects of the quilts and quilting practices in each state. Despite the difficulties that scholars will encounter when examining state quilt survey data, we believe that additional systematic analyses of these data should be encouraged.

Acknowledgments

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