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Quilts from Nebraska Collections

Norman Geske

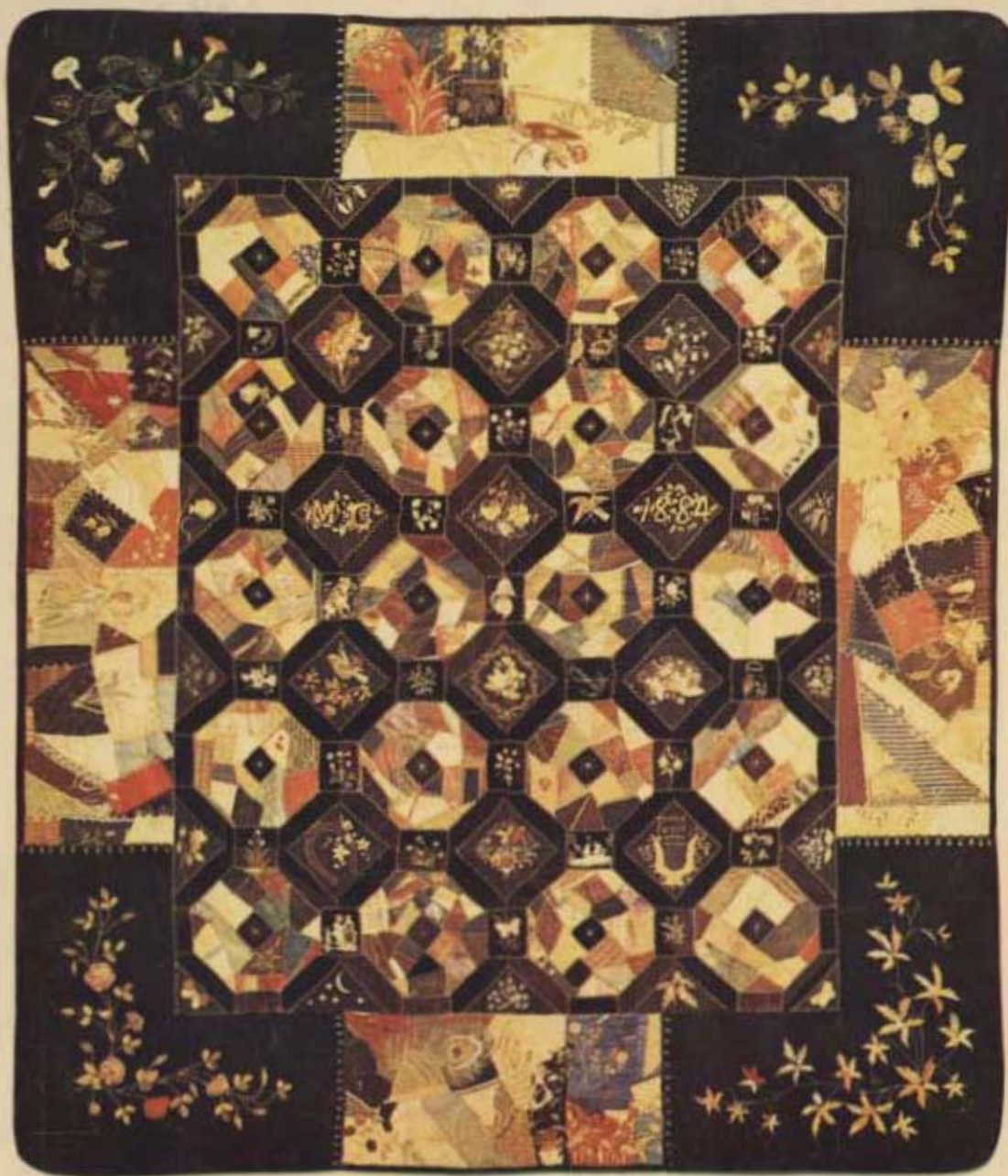
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QUILTS FROM NEBRASKA COLLECTIONS

**An exhibition presented in collaboration with
The Lincoln Quilters Guild**

**SHELDON MEMORIAL ART GALLERY
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA — LINCOLN
September 17 - October 13, 1974**

PREFACE

In early America most quilts were made for utilitarian purposes. Later, when time and fabrics became more plentiful, quilt making developed into an art form which flourished during the 19th century and continues to do so today. Within the broad definition of "patchwork," three types are represented in this exhibition—pieced, applique and crazy.

Pieced quilts are made from materials cut in geometric shapes and put together in pattern blocks. These blocks are repeated to form the quilt top. The designs were often of political, historical or religious events, but many also were associated with abstract visual ideas and images. "Rocky Road to California" and "Lincoln Quilt" are examples of the first category; "Indiana Puzzle" and "Log Cabin" the second; "Star of Bethlehem" and "Jacobs Ladder" the third. Names, however, varied for the identical pattern in different localities.

Applique quilts are made by cutting patterns and sewing them to a base cloth. Usually these were not made for regular household use, but rather tended to be the "pretty" or "best" quilts and had flowers, trees, birds or fruit as motifs.

Crazy quilts are made of odd-shaped bits and pieces of material put together in a random pattern. These reached their artistic height in the Victorian era when fabrics such as silks and velvets replaced cottons and flannels. Creative stitchery fills in certain patches and lines the edges of others. Crazy quilts were often used as decorative throws on couches.

All the quilts in this exhibition belong to either museums or individuals in Nebraska and many were made by native Nebraskans. Of special note are the five quilts created by Mrs. Grace Snyder of North Platte.

Almost three hundred examples were assembled for consideration and from this number fifty-five were selected solely on their merits as works of art. Their patterns, colors and materials illustrate the wide range quilting provides for individual creativity. Considerations relating to workmanship, condition and age were not used as criteria of primary importance. From this selective sampling it can be seen that "quilt making" is an art form of quality and importance.

INTRODUCTION

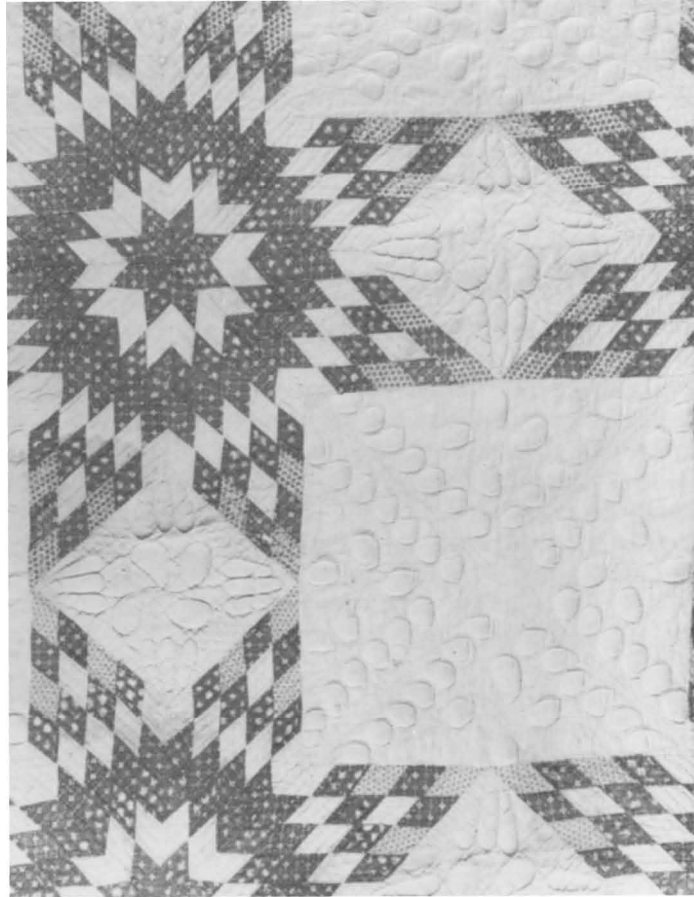
A quilt is a bedcover, that's for sure, but it is not a coverlet nor is it a counterpane. It is usually made of two thicknesses of fabric, the top or front pieced together from a variety of materials in a number of colors; the back or lining is generally of one piece in one color, the two frequently but not invariably sandwich a layer of soft padding and the whole thing is stitched through from front to back in a pattern which may conform to the pieced design or may, on the contrary, follow its own pattern in a kind of visual counterpoint. The pattern can be further embellished with needlework of various kinds, ornamental or commemorative, and, after generations of practice and invention, quilt making has achieved an iconography of its own reflecting the domestic inspirations of uncounted, anonymous, female artists. One has only to recite the names of the traditional patterns to sense the interplay of skill and imagination which makes a quilt into a work of art.

At their functional level they have kept the sleeper warm. In addition they have filled the role of social coordinator. They have been the inspiration of virtuoso needlework as well as creative invention. They have been valued elements in a dowry and part of an inheritance handed down through the generations of a family. At their most extraordinary levels of accomplishment they have been status symbols, entirely divorced from the vulgarity of use. Nowadays they are apt to hang on a wall like a painting and to even hang on the walls of an art gallery, their apotheosis achieved.

All these considerations have come into play in the organization of this exhibition and it is more than a pleasure to acknowledge the hard work of the members of the Lincoln Quilters Guild and the staff of the Sheldon Gallery in bringing to public attention the achievements of this traditional anonymous art as it exists in the public and private collections of Nebraska. Fortunately, some of the makers are known to us, some of them are giving the art its contemporary form, and we are happy to give them the recognition they deserve.

As a gallery-community collaboration it is a pleasure to acknowledge in particular Mrs. Velda Coffey, who first brought the idea of the exhibition to our consideration, Mrs. Mary Ghormley, Mrs. Louise Howey, Mrs. Jean Harnsberger, Mrs. Sally Campbell all of whom provided the knowledge, energy and enthusiasm which is so necessary to the realization of such projects. Our thanks as well to Mrs. Imelda DeGraw of the Denver Museum, who brought a trained curatorial eye to the selection of examples to be shown, to Jon Nelson whose installation took full advantage of the visual amenities of the Sheldon Gallery and to Mrs. Beth Gutcheon who brought to the opening workshop the essential warmth of the creative process itself. Lastly, the catalogue which provides a permanent record of the event, is in no small way the result of the fastidious professionalism of Kaz Tada and Paul Bateman.

Norman A. Geske
Director, Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery



1. STAR OF BETHLEHEM, 107½" x 110"
Probably made in the early 1800's.
Red and brown calico with trapunto and homespun
lining.
Owner: Mrs. Richard S. Harnsberger, Lincoln

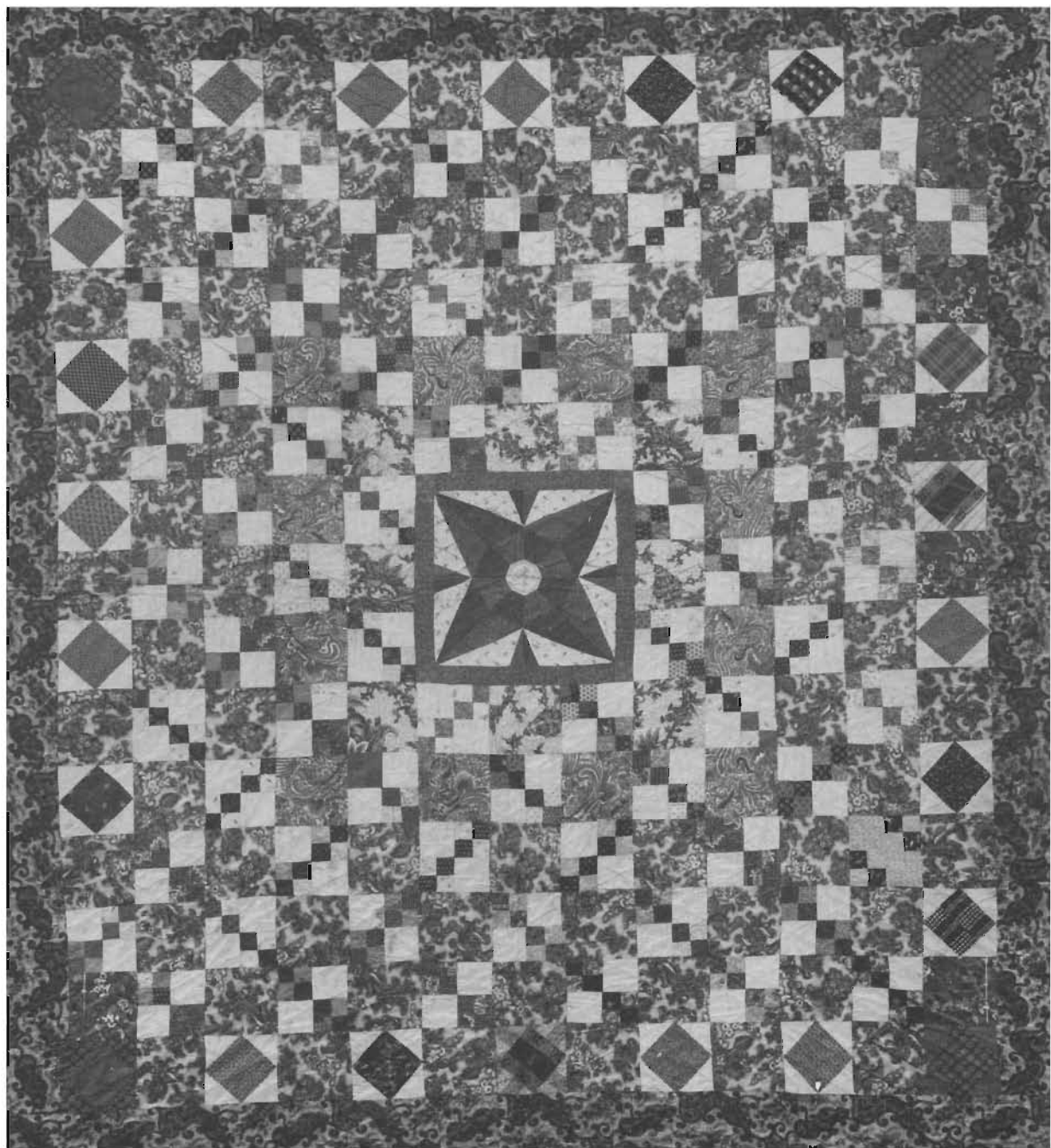


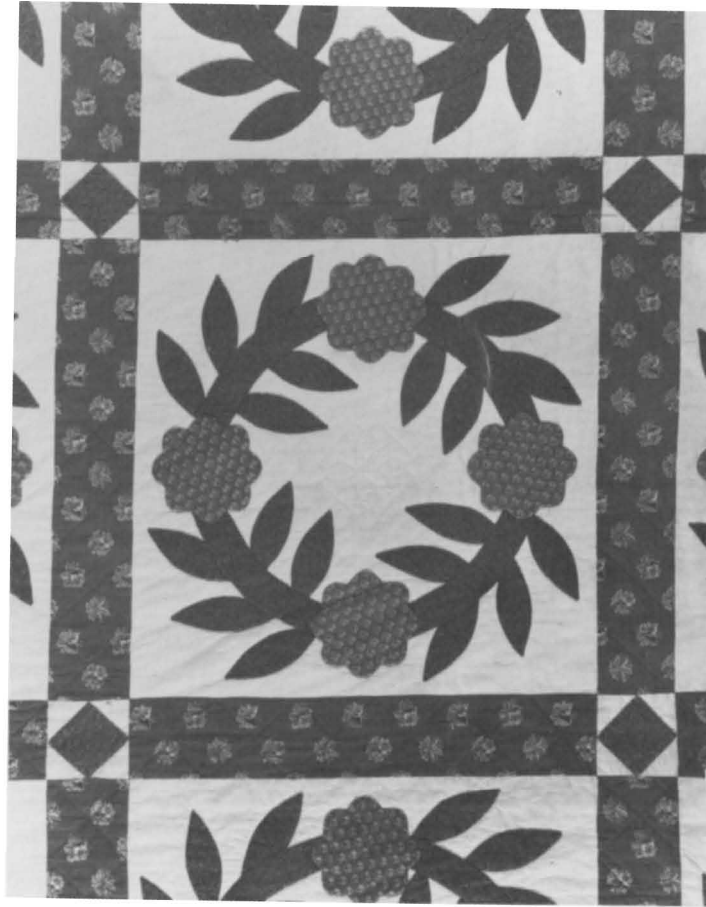
2. PATCHWORK QUILT, 87½" x 88"

Made in 1844 by Mary Rhoads, grandmother of owner, at the age of eight.

Red and green calico four-pointed star in center surrounded by brown chintz "four-patches" and "square-within-a-square" blocks. The maker's name, age and date made are recorded in the middle of the star. A complementary lining of small print is used.

Owner: Mrs. Harry A. Taylor, Lincoln



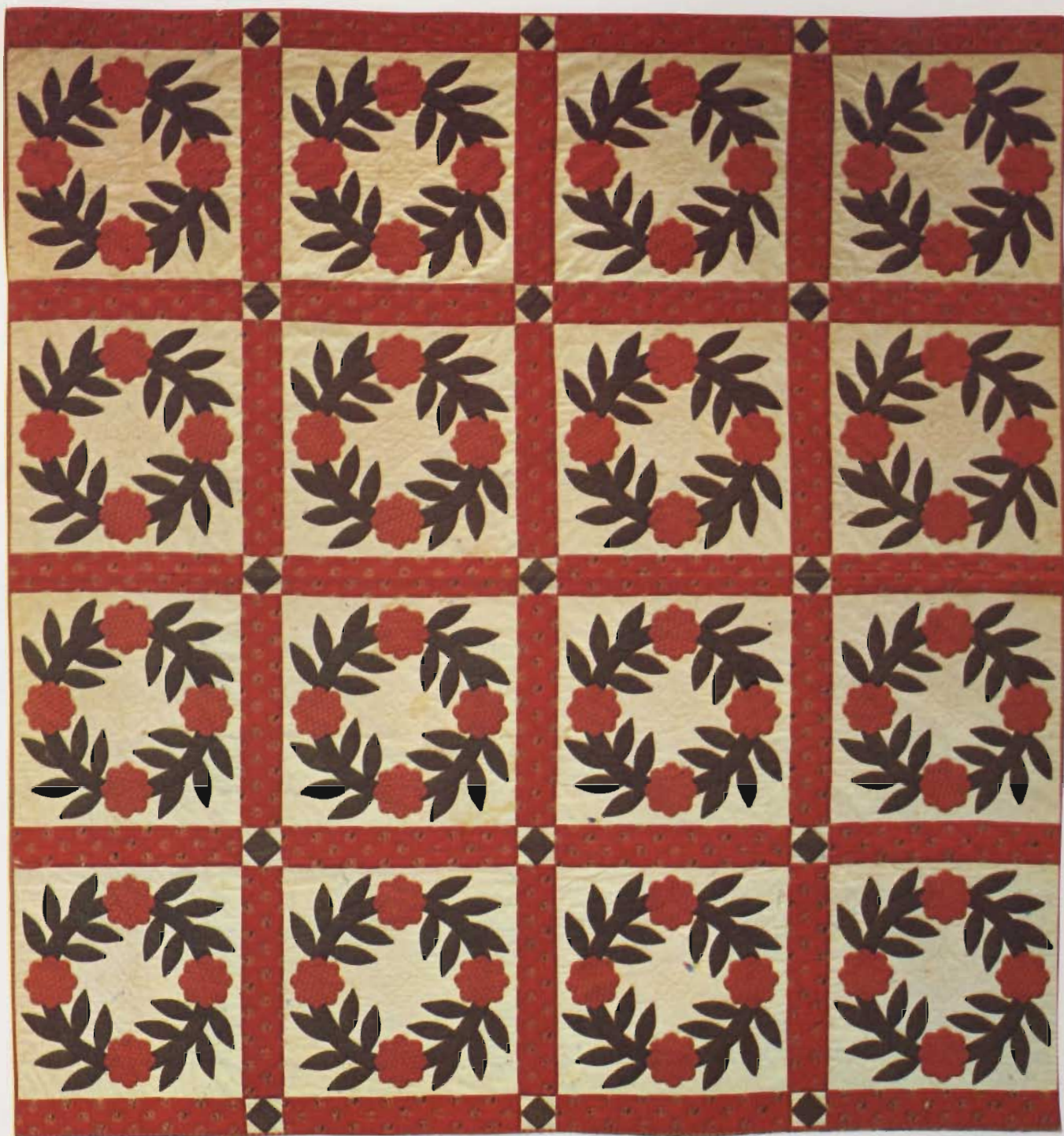


3. ROSE WREATH. 81" x 77"

Made in 1845.

This quilt was made on a two year voyage from New York to San Francisco via Cape Horn, by Mary Elizabeth Stark of Mystic, Connecticut, owner's great-great grandmother. Red and green calico applied on white. The lining is black and white calico print.

Owner: Mrs. Ellen Badgley Black, Scottsbluff



4. DIAMOND STAR, 81" x 84"

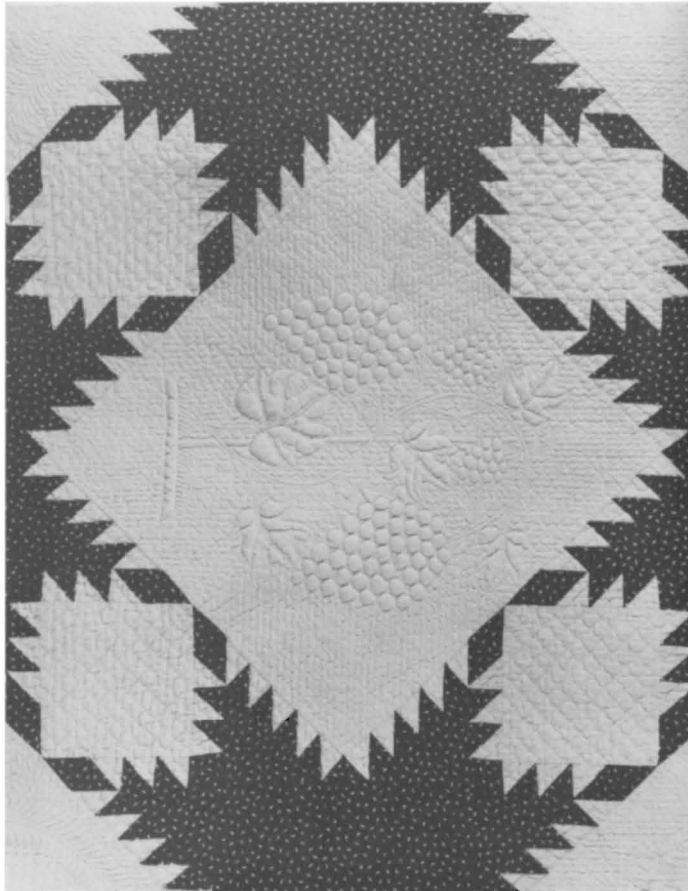
Made about 1850.

Pieced calico with appliqued corner stars.

Brought from Middleburg, Pa. to Hooper, Nebraska
in 1892.

Owner: May Museum, Fremont

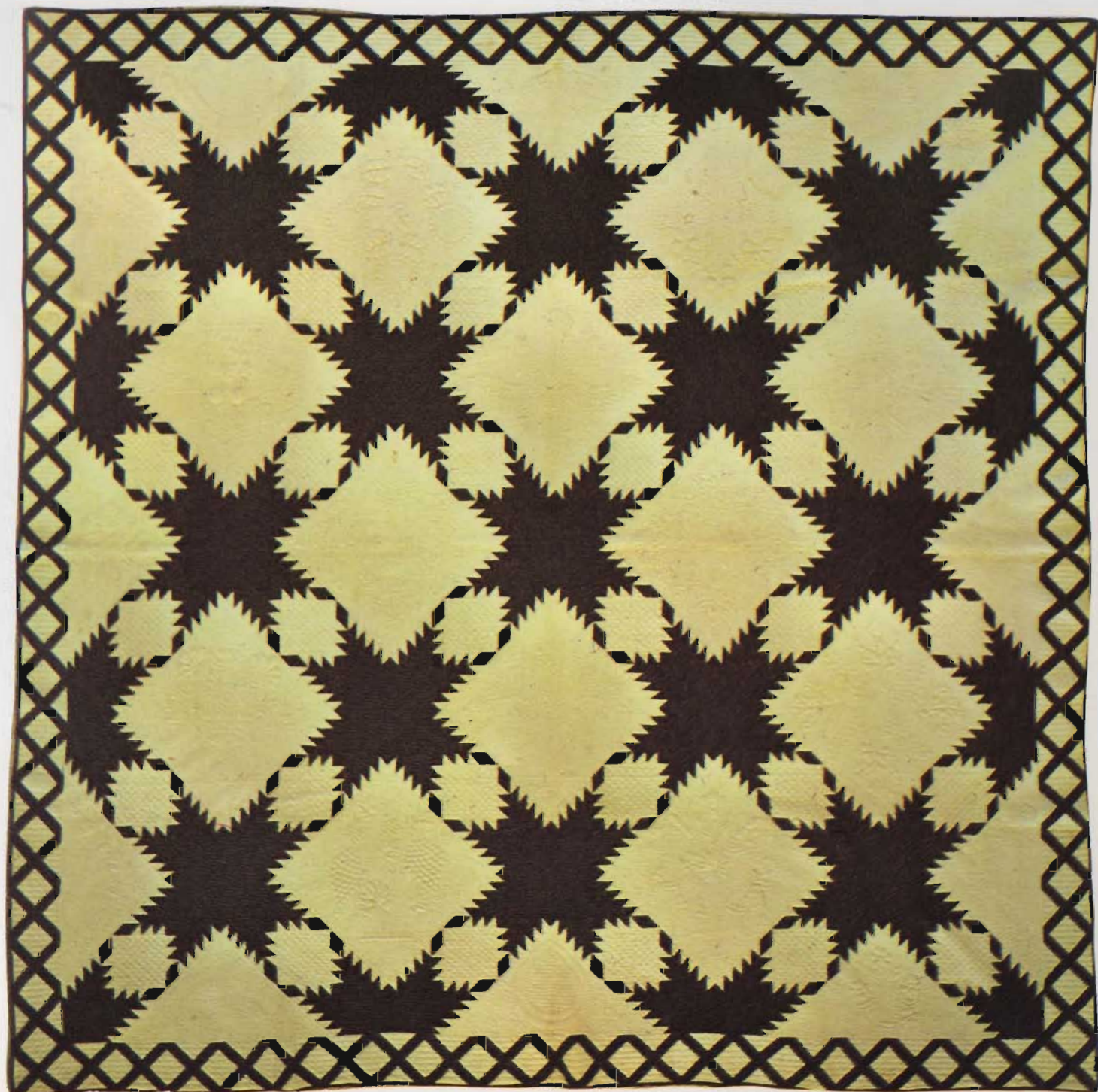




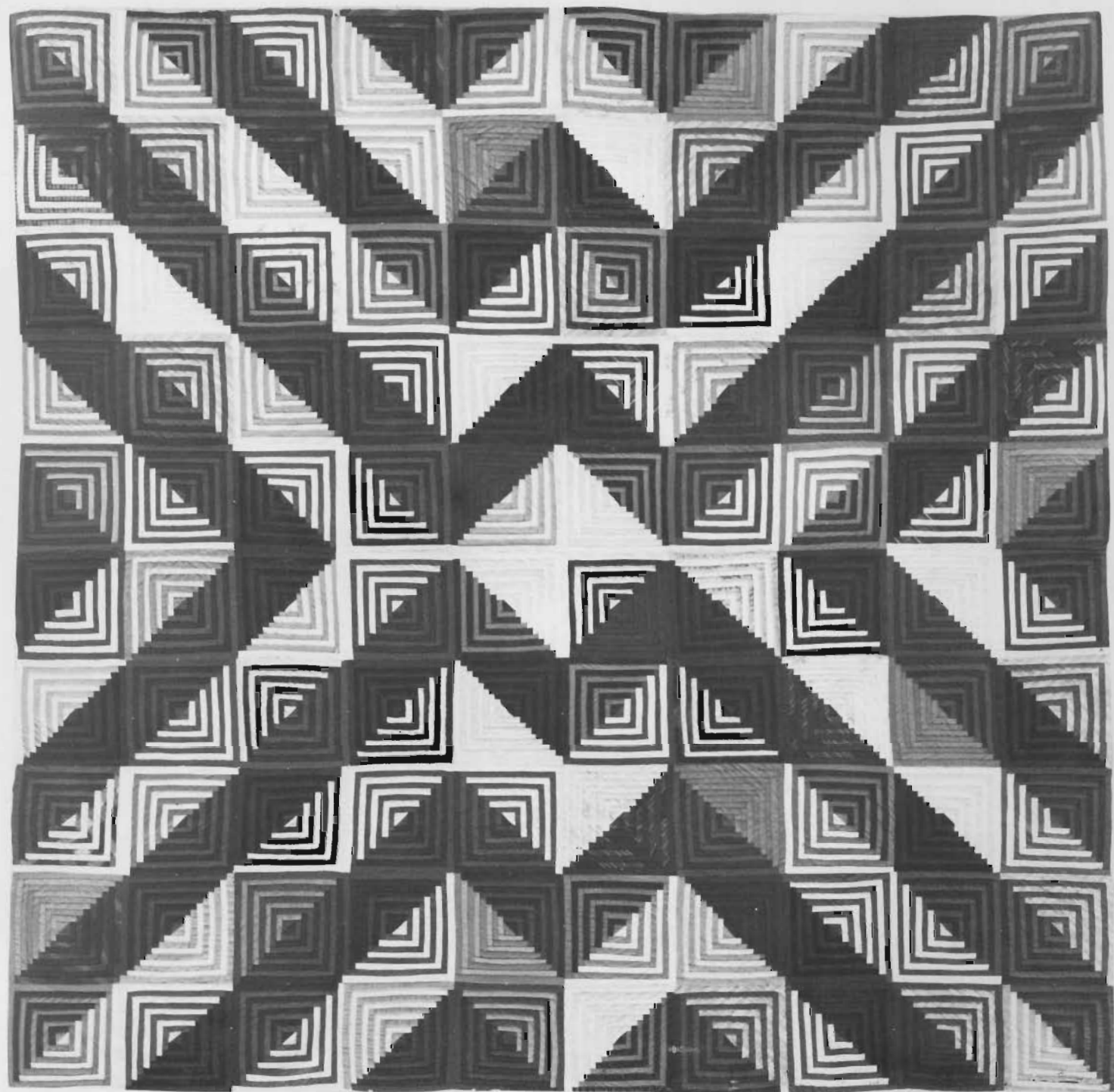
5. FEATHERED STAR, 94" x 94½"

Made before 1850 by owner's great grandmother. Dark blue and white calico. Each plain block has a different design using trapunto quilting. Notable border.

Owner: Mrs. Fred Slepicka, Geneva



6. LOG CABIN, also known as "ZIG-ZAG", 81" x 81"
Made about 1850 in Nebraska.
Velvet, wool and silk. The arrangement of dark and
light materials creates the pattern.
Owner: Mrs. Raymond H. Haggh, Lincoln



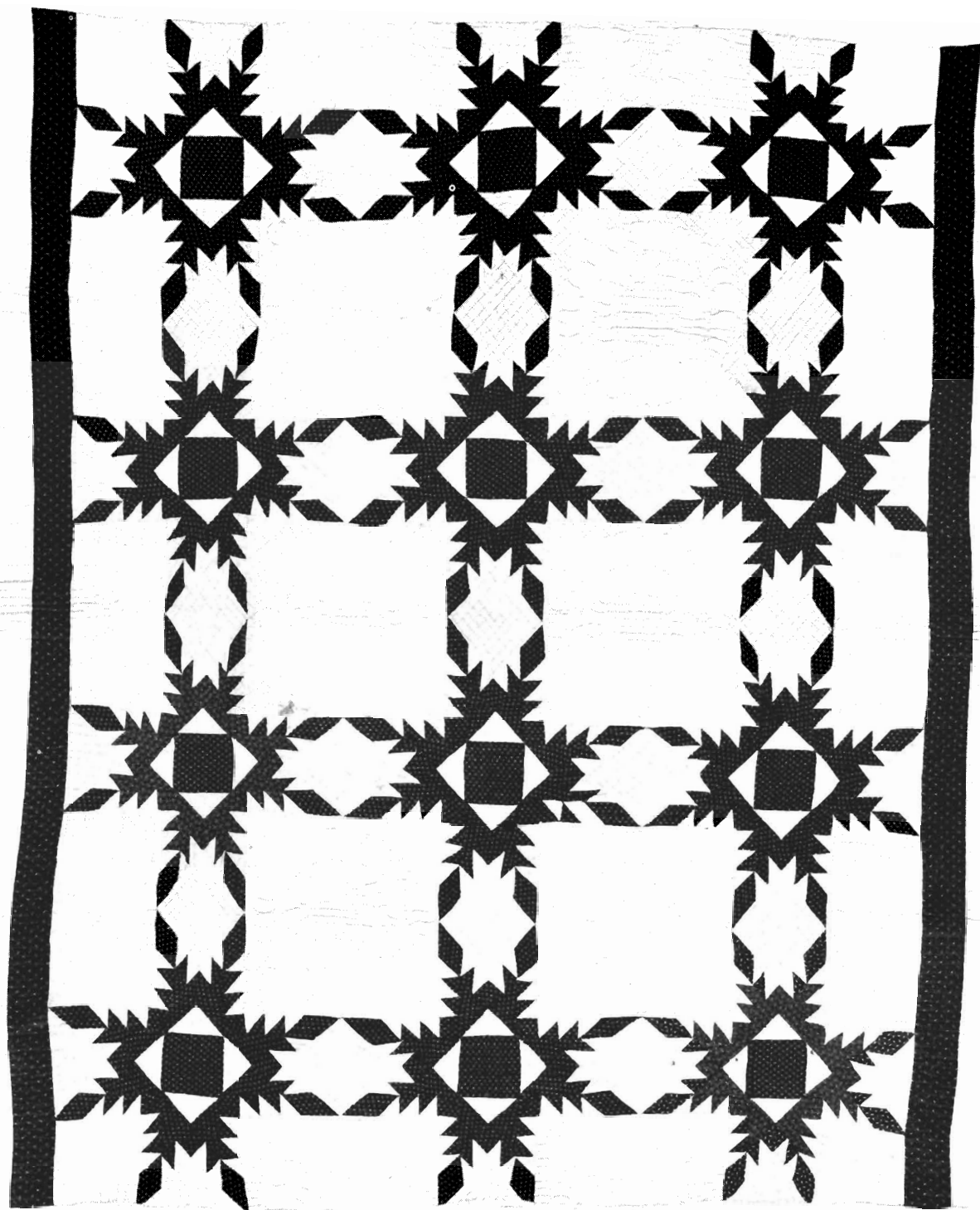


7. FEATHERED STAR, 71" x 82"

Probably made in the 1850's.

Dark blue calico on white. The quilting is a feathered wreath on white squares. Homespun backing.

Owner: Mrs. Richard S. Harnsberger, Lincoln





8. TULIP, 80½" x 91"

Made in 1856 by Melissia S. Snyder.

Appliqued calicos in red, green and yellow on white muslin. Trapunto flowers and baskets appliqued with very fine buttonhole stitch. Red sawtooth inner border. Trailing appliqued tulip on outer border. The tulip design is repeated in the quilting.

Owner: Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer, Grand Island



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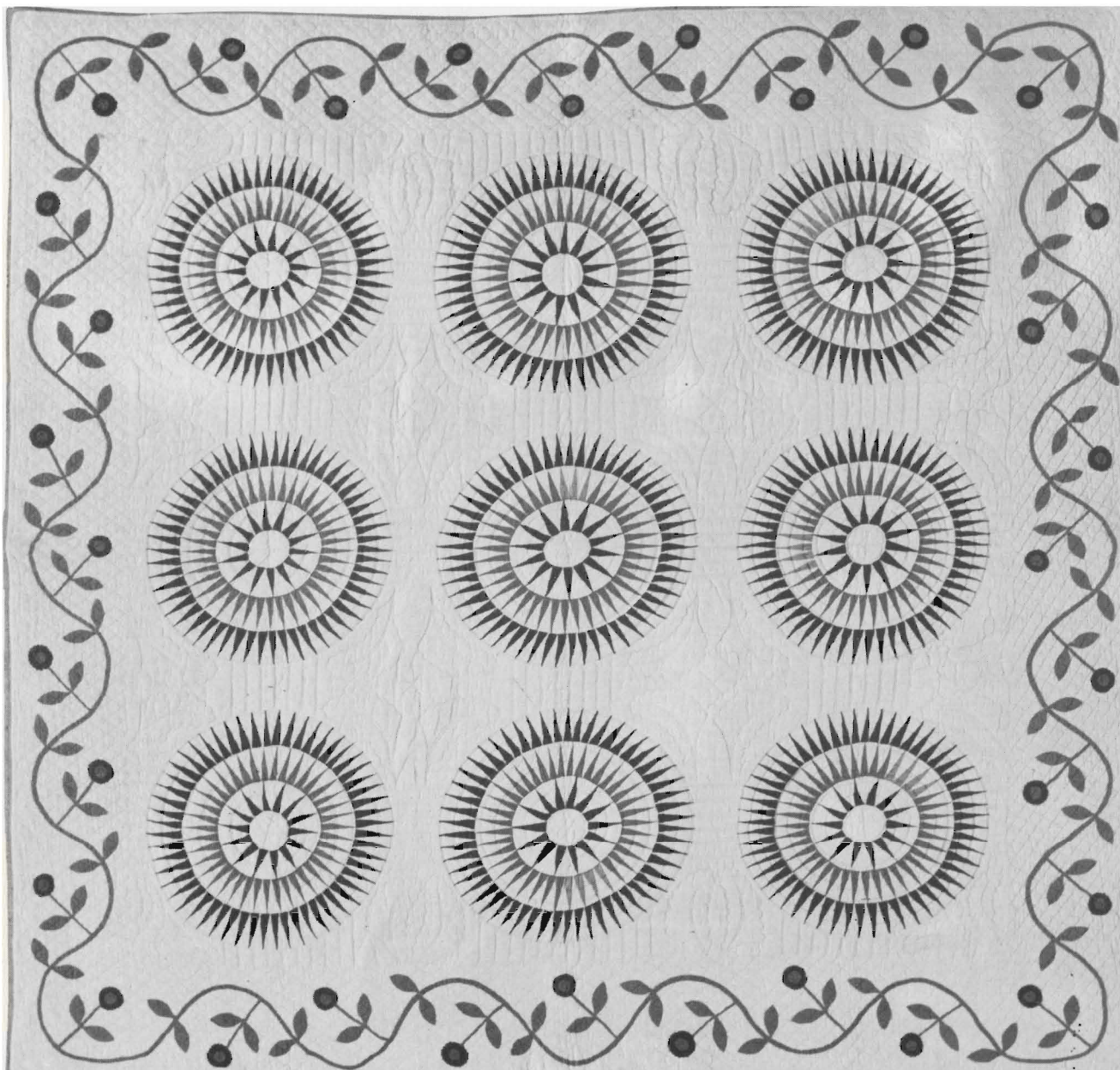


9. SCHOOL HOUSE, 67" x 70"

Made before 1858 by Mrs. Durr, great-great grandmother of owner, and Margaret Zahler, great grandmother of owner.

School houses are pieced of calicos with appliquéd doors, door knobs and window sashes.

Owner: Mrs. M. V. Landreth, Page

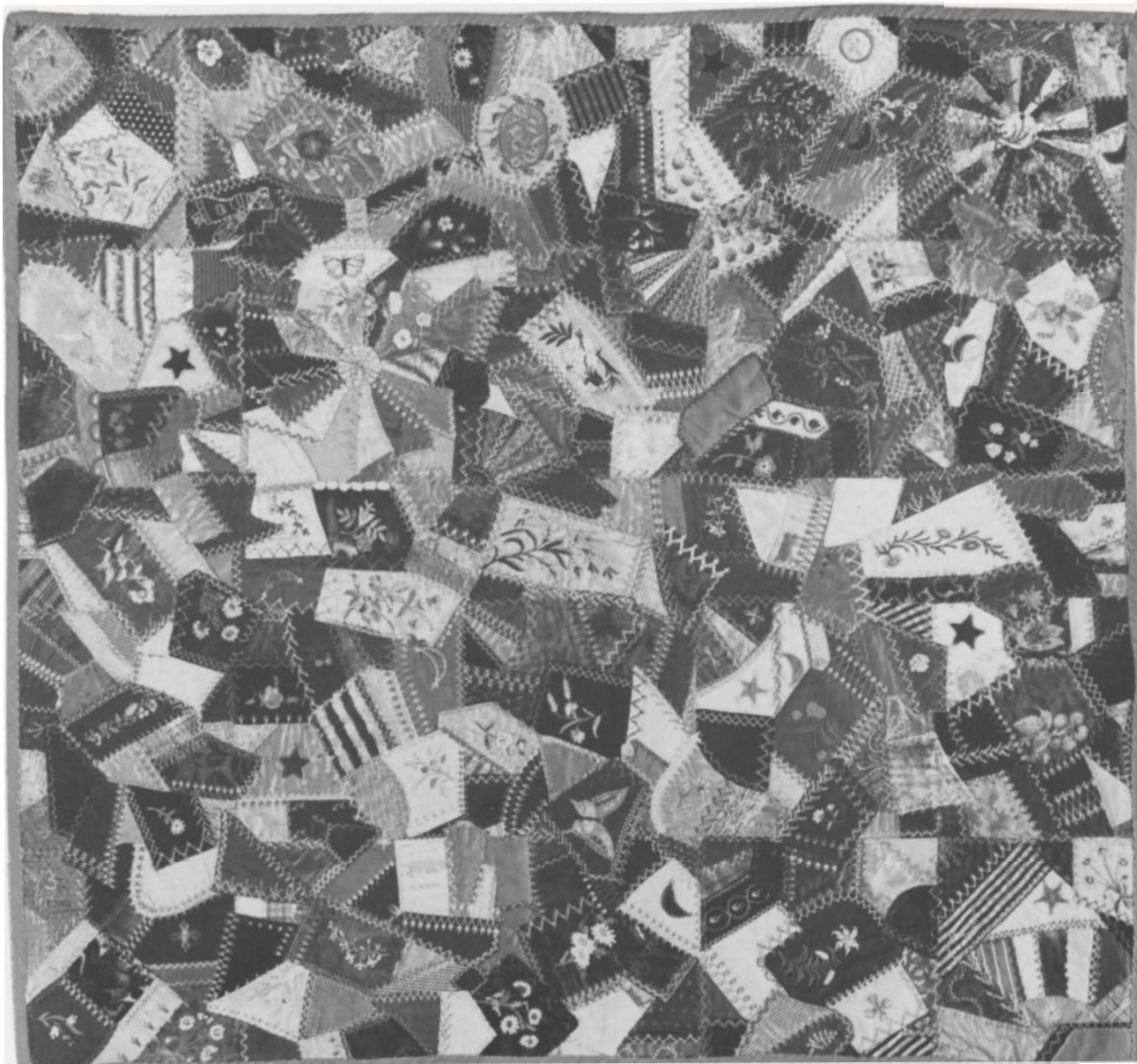


10. SUNBURST WITH SPICED PINK BORDER, 78" x 80"

Made in 1859 by Mrs. Pickering, owner's great-great grandmother.

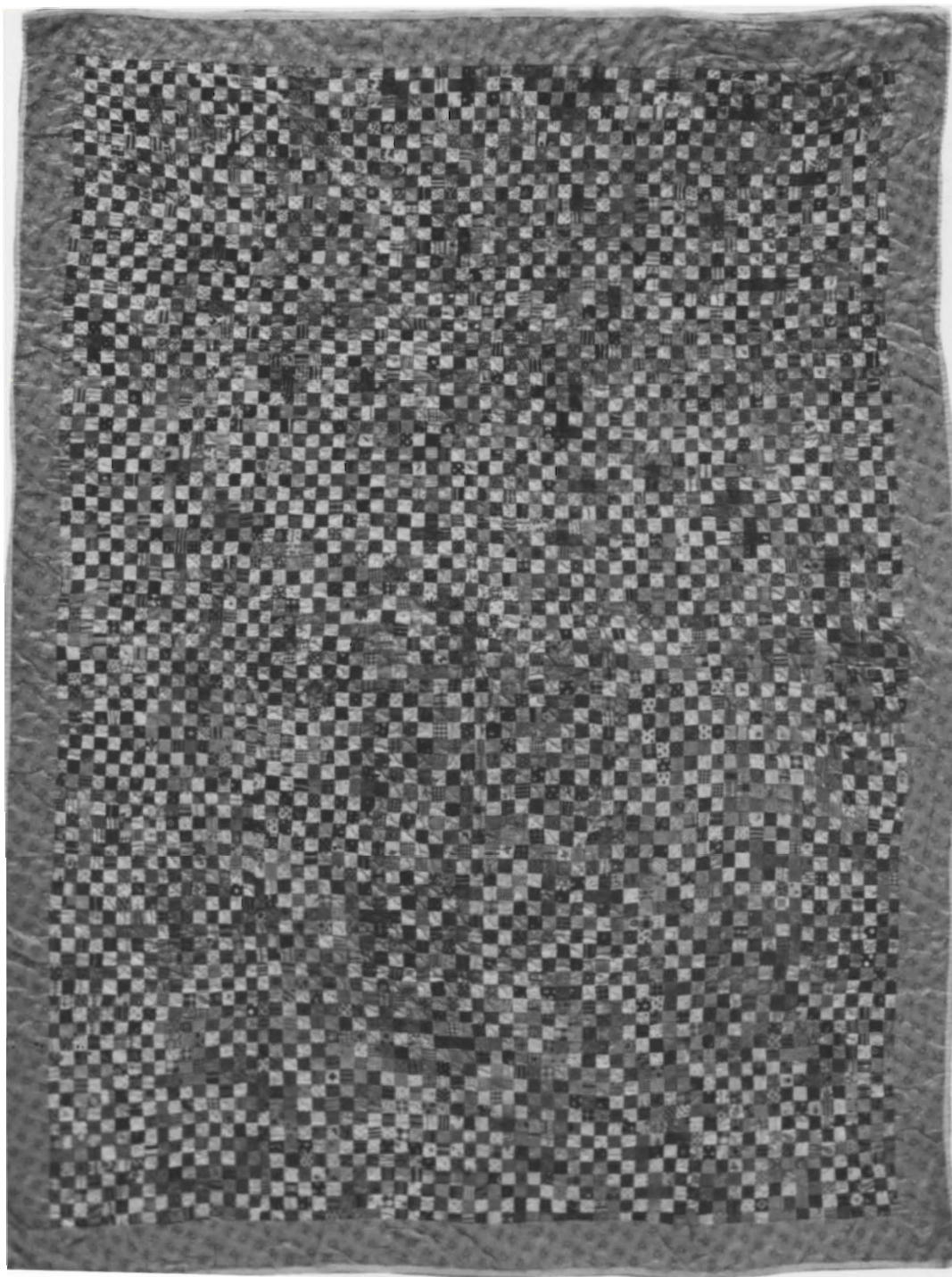
All cotton material. This type of circular piecing requires great accuracy and skill. The applied border contains a unique gathered flower.

Owner: Mrs. Paul Hanson, Lincoln



11. CRAZY QUILT, 59½" x 64"

Made in 1864 by Mrs. Sam Gast of Sidney, grandmother of owner.
Silks and velvets with heavy embroidery and a bright brick colored lining.
Owner: Mrs. Gordon Bryant, Sr., Tekamah



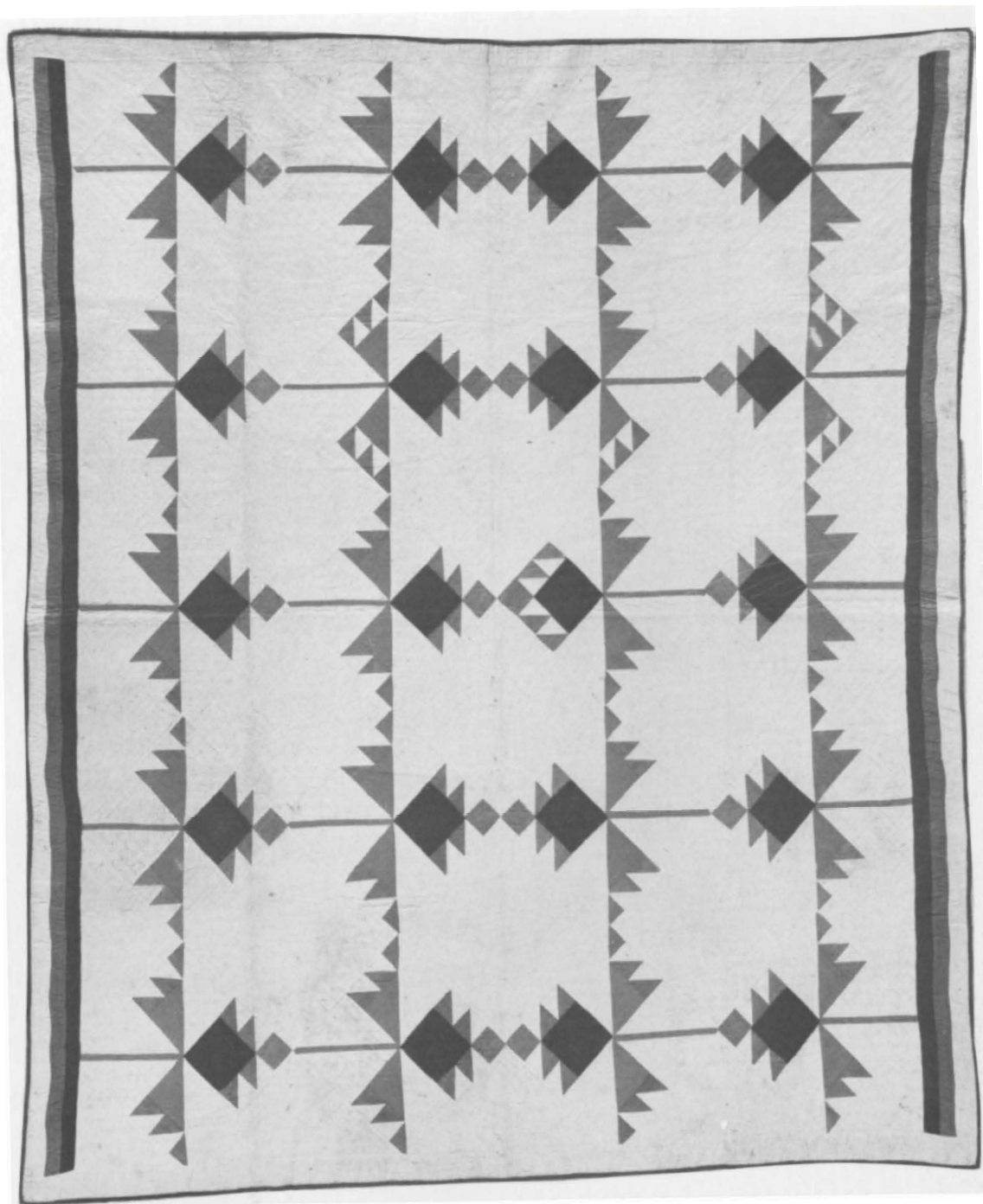
12. CRIB QUILT, 46½" x 59½"

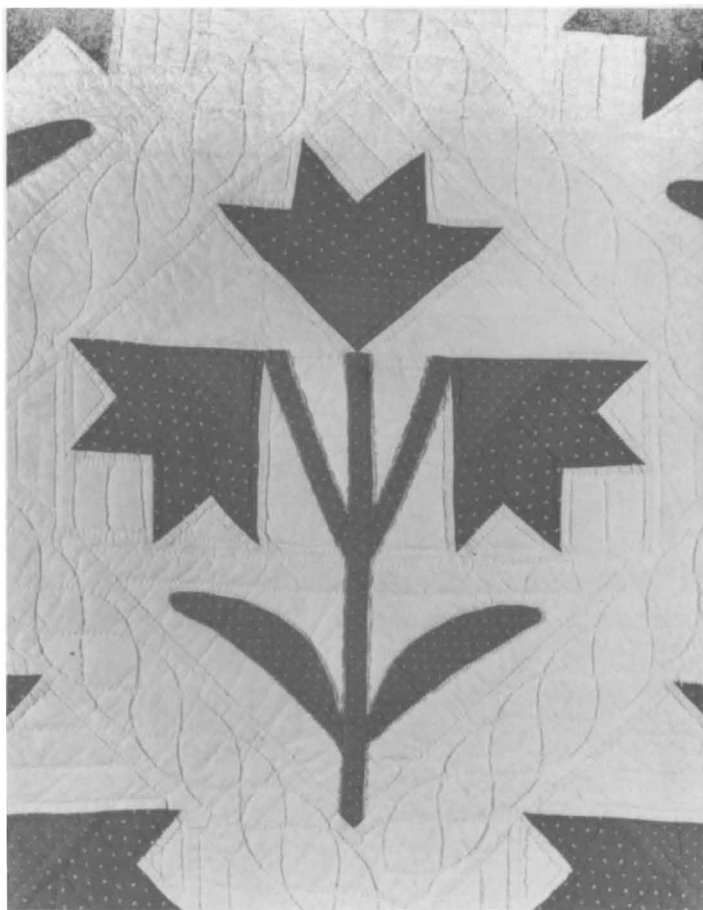
Made in 1865 by Flora Streeter, at the age of eight.

Made of 5,568 calico pieces.

Owner: Mrs. Milton Beechner, Lincoln

13. ENGLISH IVY, 79" x 64"
Made about 1870 by Lodema
Evilyn West.
Pieced of plain red, green and
yellow calico. Set together
with white blocks.
Owner: Nebraska State Histor-
ical Society, Lincoln





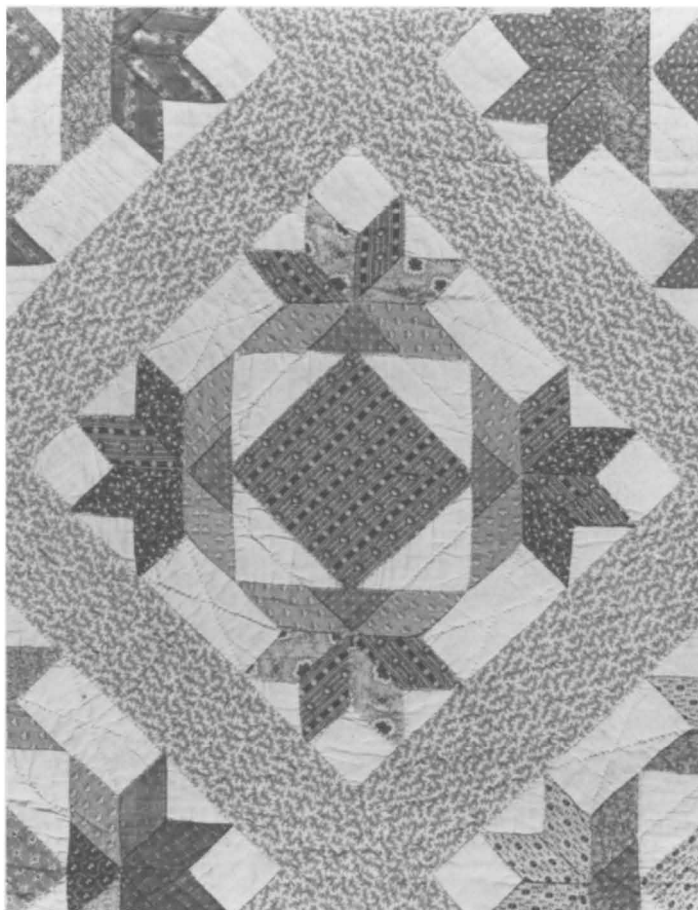
14. NOONDAY LILY, also called "North Carolina Lily" and "Prairie Lily", 86" x 84"

Made in 1870 by Elsie Wilcox, owner's mother.

Pieced of red and green calico, appliqued stems and leaves. Clam shell quilting in half blocks and corner blocks.

Owner: Mrs. Charles Watkins, Lincoln



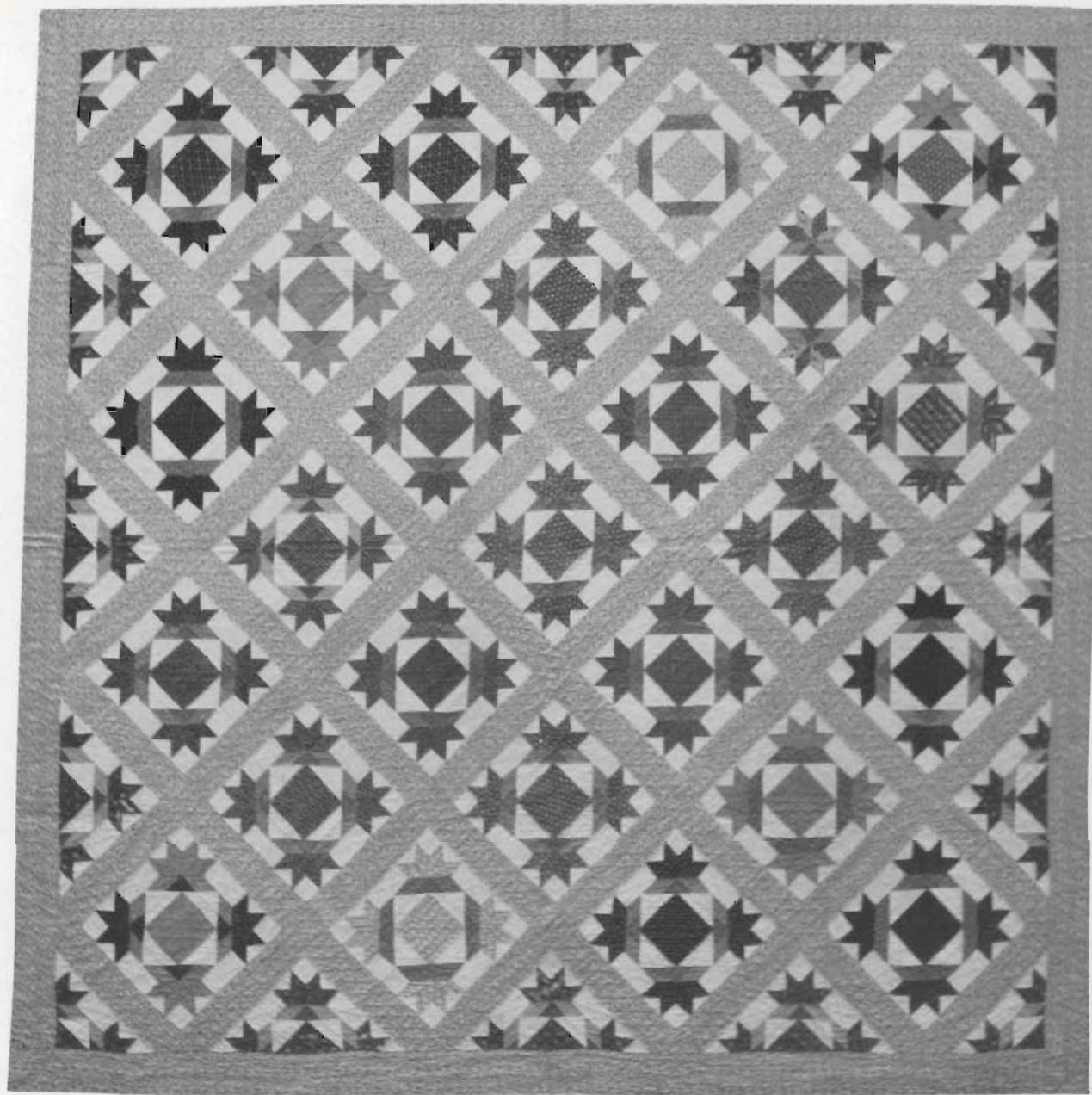


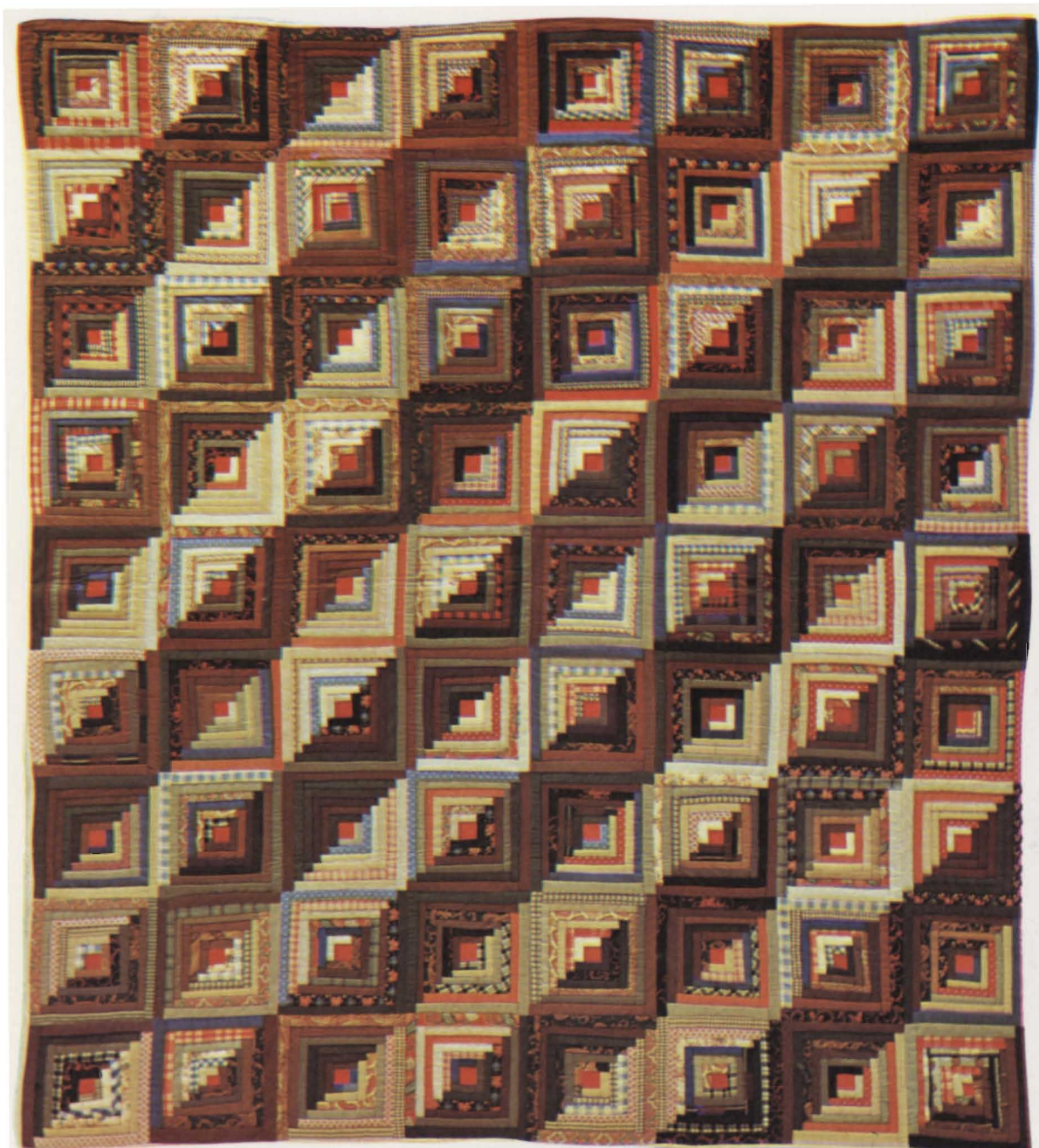
15. HANDS ALL AROUND, 79" x 78"

Made in 1870 by the mother of H. A. Burrill.

This is a combination of patterns. The border and joining strips are calico with an all-over design red on white. The other calicos vary in brown and rose prints with small green triangles. The lining is rose print design.

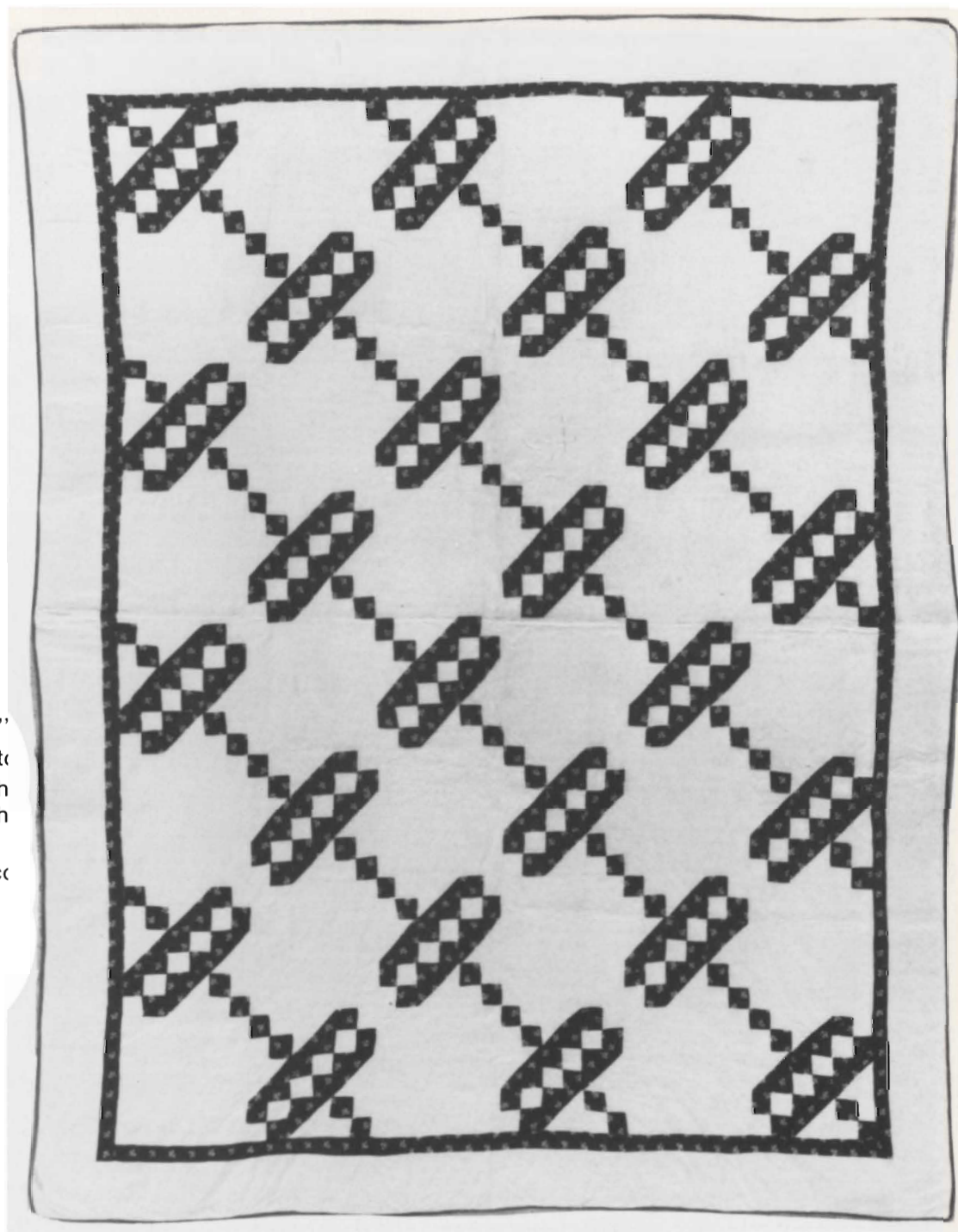
Owner: Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln

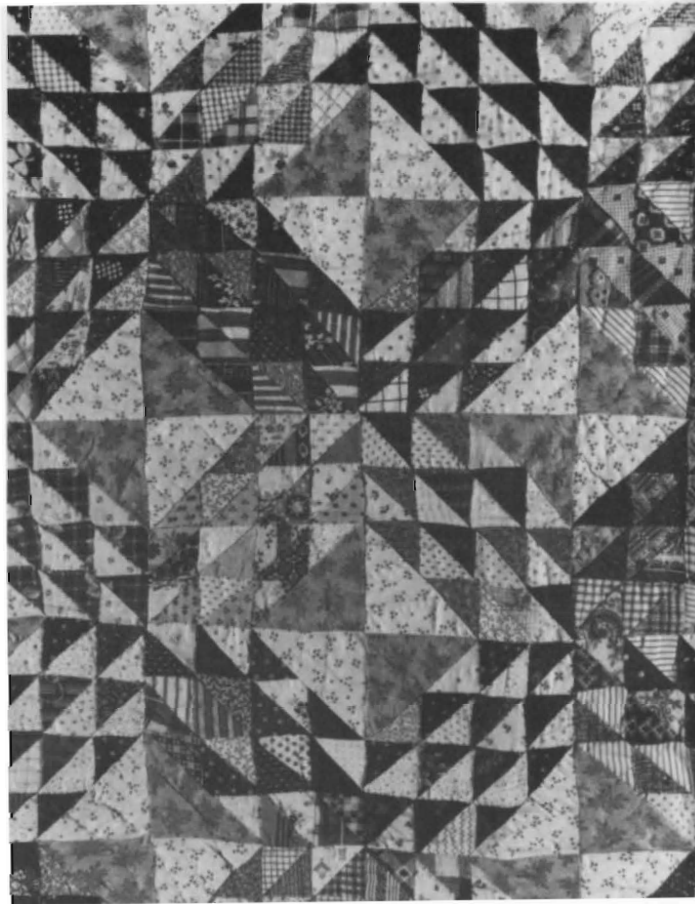




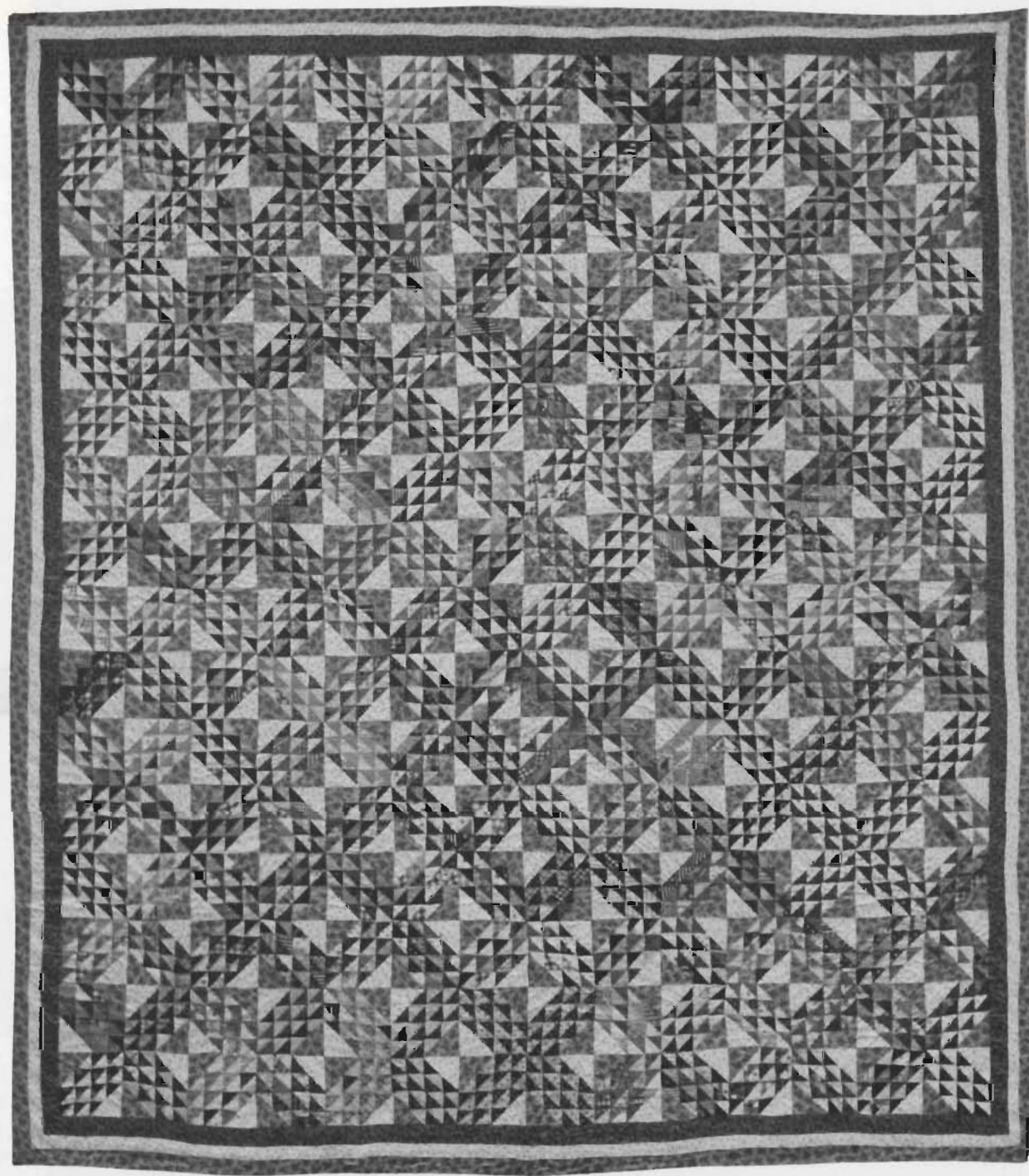
16. LOG CABIN, also known as "Straight Furrow", 80" x 89½"
Made in 1878 by Mary Graham, Lyons, Iowa.
The materials are wool and challis sewed to muslin blocks.
Owner: The Misses Grace and Mabel Souther, Lincoln

17. JACOB'S LADDER, 70" x 91"
Made about 1880 by Mrs. Roy Eatr
Pieced of dark blue calico and wh
muslin. Set together with plain wh
squares.
Owner: Mrs. Kenneth D. Rose, Linc





18. TINY OCEAN WAVE, 79" x 69½"
Made about 1880 by Mrs. Roy Eaton.
Pieced of assorted calico triangles predominately
pink and white.
Owner: Mrs. Kenneth D. Rose, Lincoln



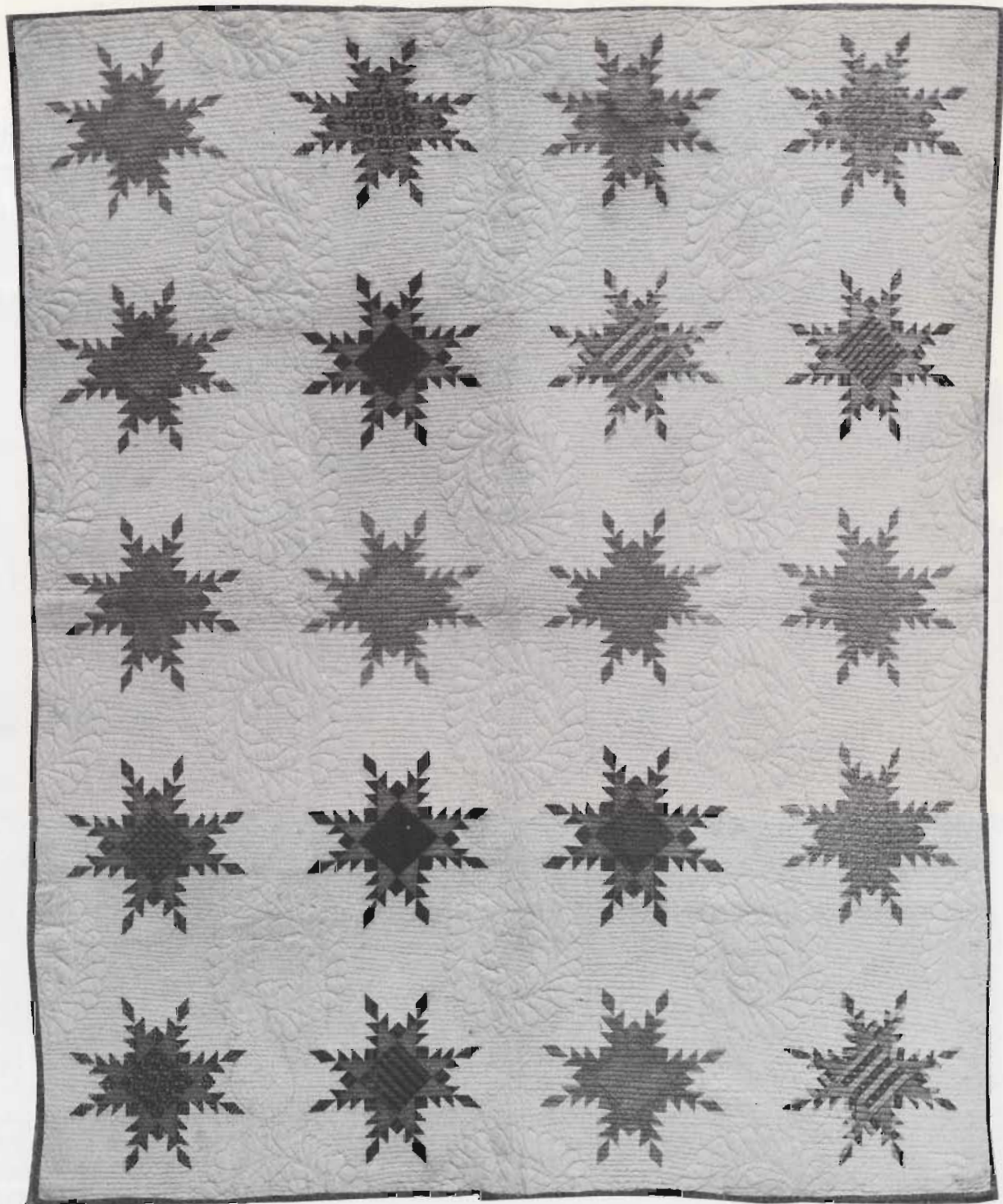


19. FEATHERED STAR, 61" x 76½"

Made in 1880 by Mary Fraker.

Pieced in pink and brown calico. Closely quilted background with feathered wreath.

Owner: Brownville Historical Society, Brownville



COVER PICTURE



20. CRAZY QUILT, 61½" x 72"

Started about 1870 and finished around 1884 by
Mae Riddler Cole at Fort Calhoun.

Ornately embroidered on velvet and silk.

Owner: Mrs. Doris Cole Clapp, Elmwood

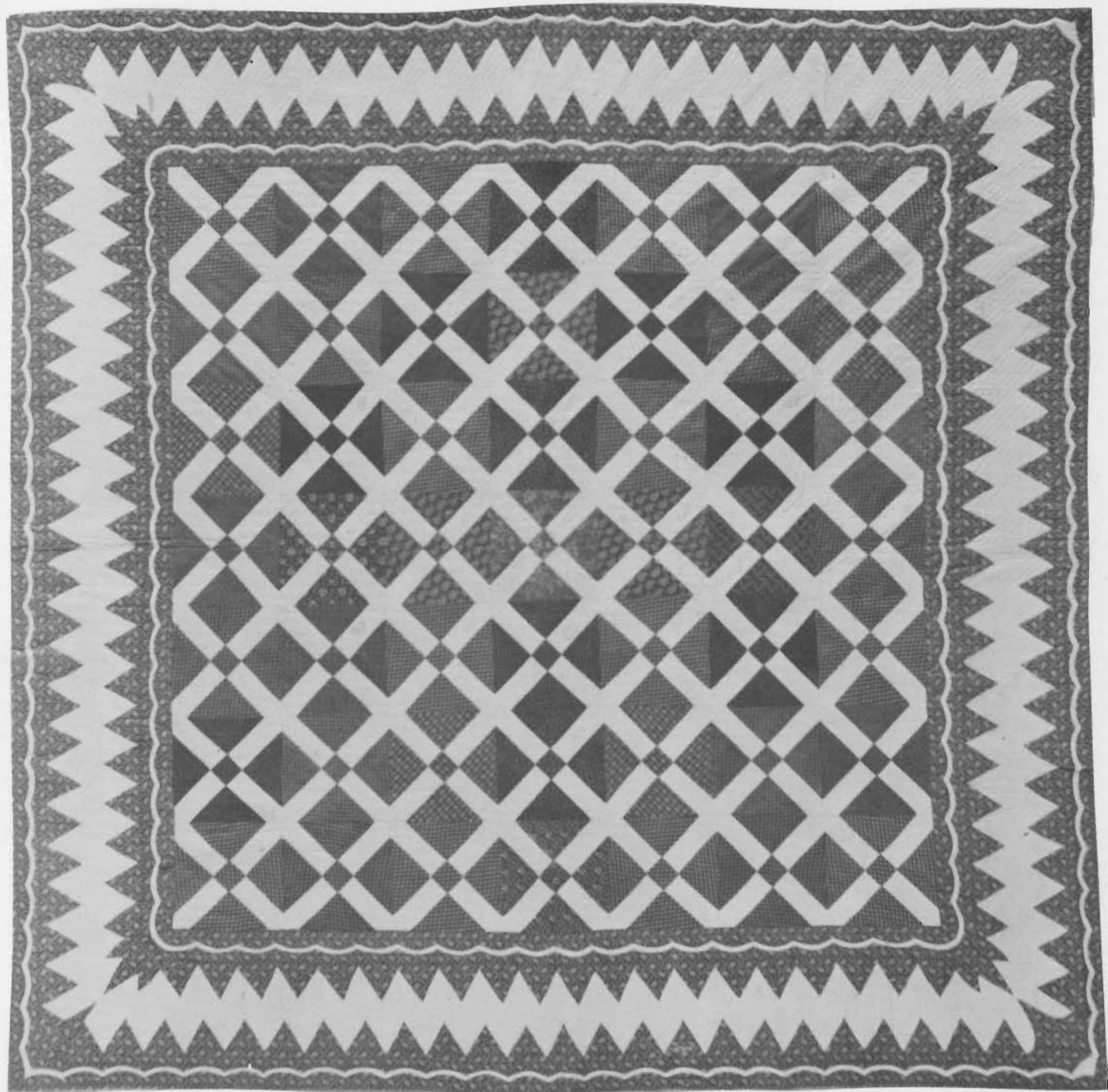
Detail of cover picture



21. MEMORY QUILT, 94" x 96½"

Made in 1884 by a group of young women in Mt.
Holly, N.J. in memory of Susan N. Burns. The mak-
ers names are written on the quilt. The applique
border of red calico is original.

Owner: Mrs. Robert Harris, Lincoln





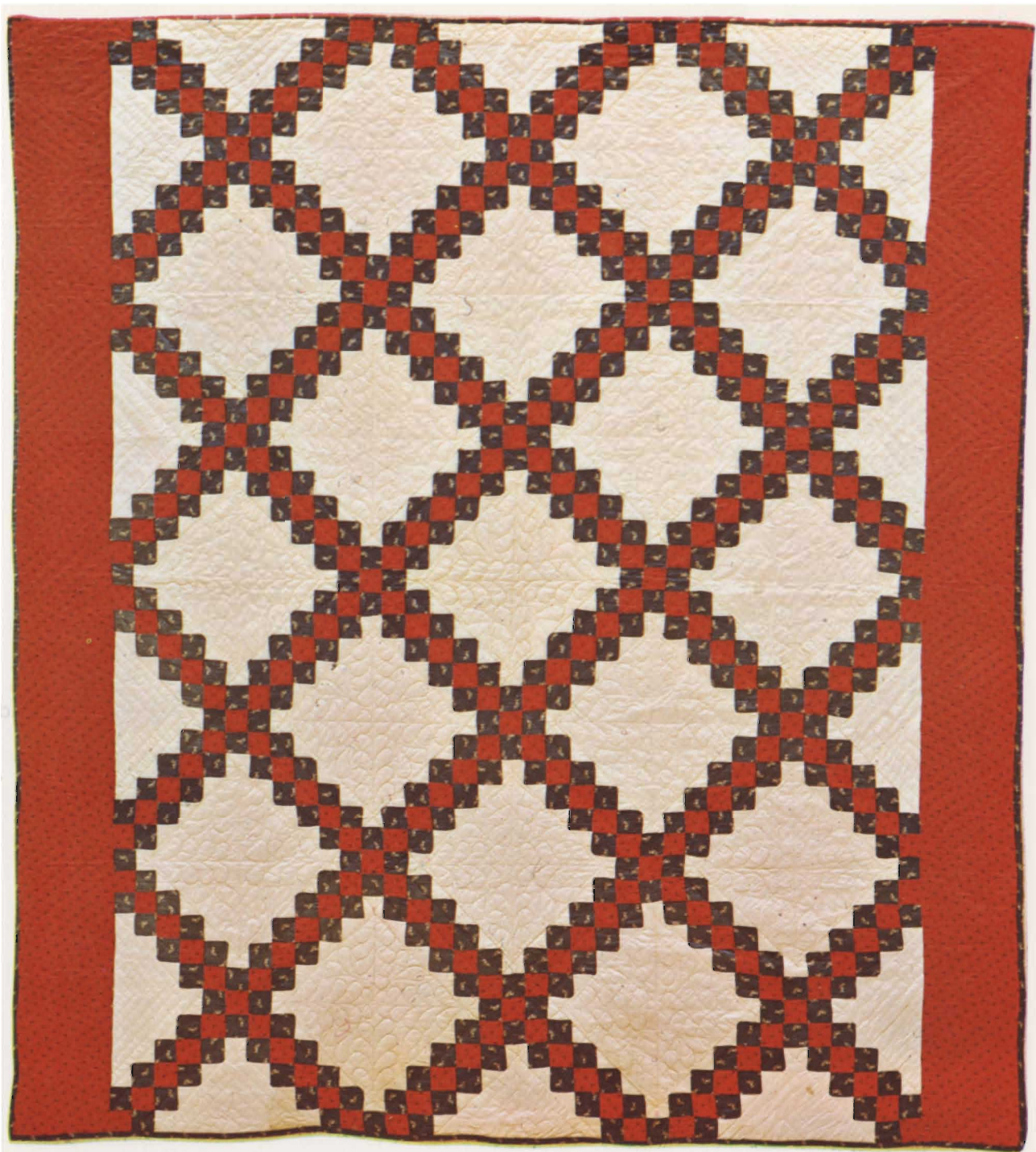
Made in 1885 by Rosalia
Van Fleet Woody, grand-
mother of owner.
Pieced of oil-boiled calico.
Owner: Mrs. Hale McCown,
Lincoln

BURSTING STAR, also called "Broken Star", 83" x 96"

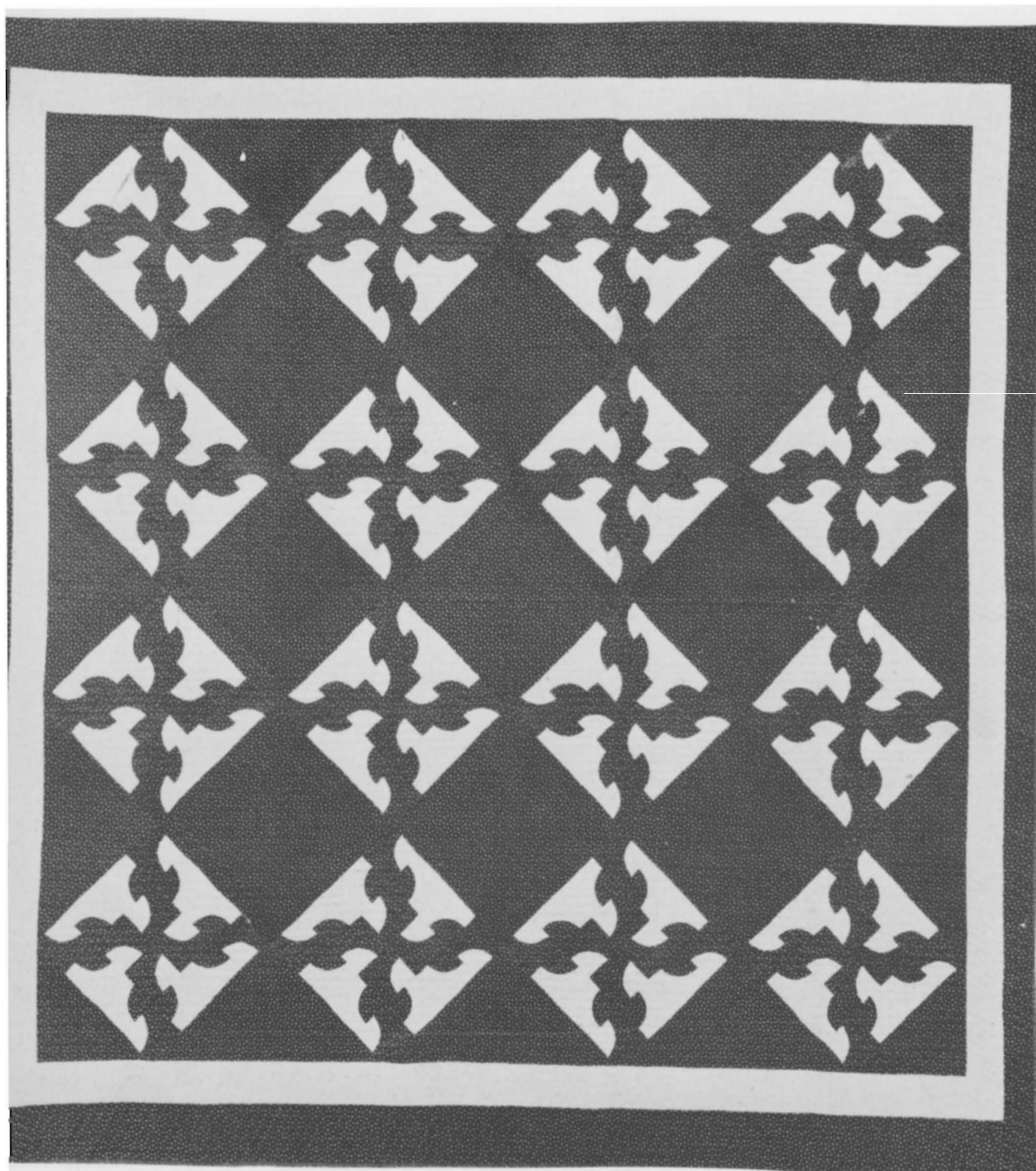
Made before 1889
by Roseanna Carson
or Mrs. John Car-
son.

Pieced calico.

Owner: Brownville
Historical Society,
Brownville



23. DOUBLE IRISH CHAIN, 77" x 86"



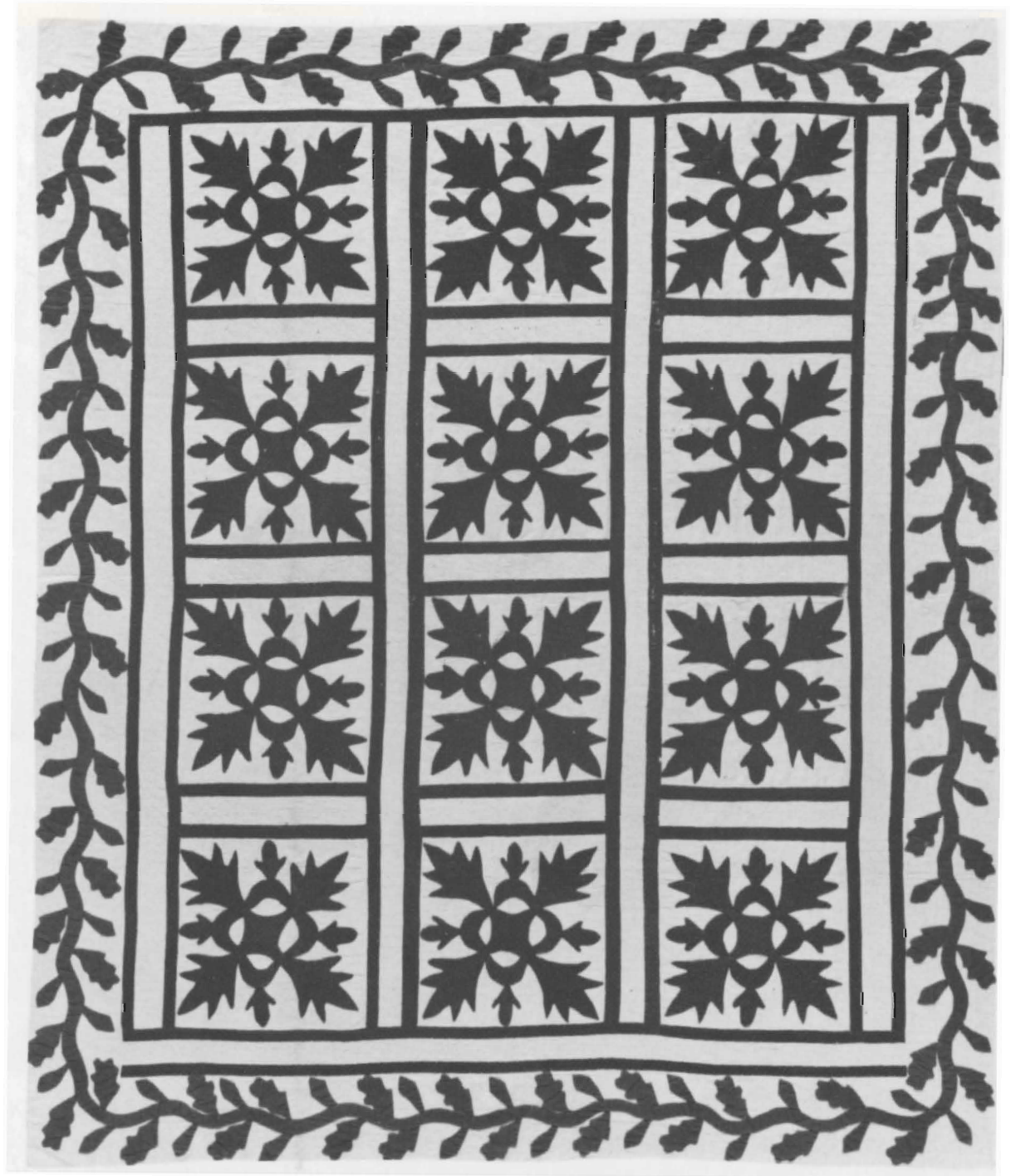
Made in 1890 by
Mrs. J. H. Fee, own-
er's great grand-
mother.

Blue and white cali-
co and muslin.

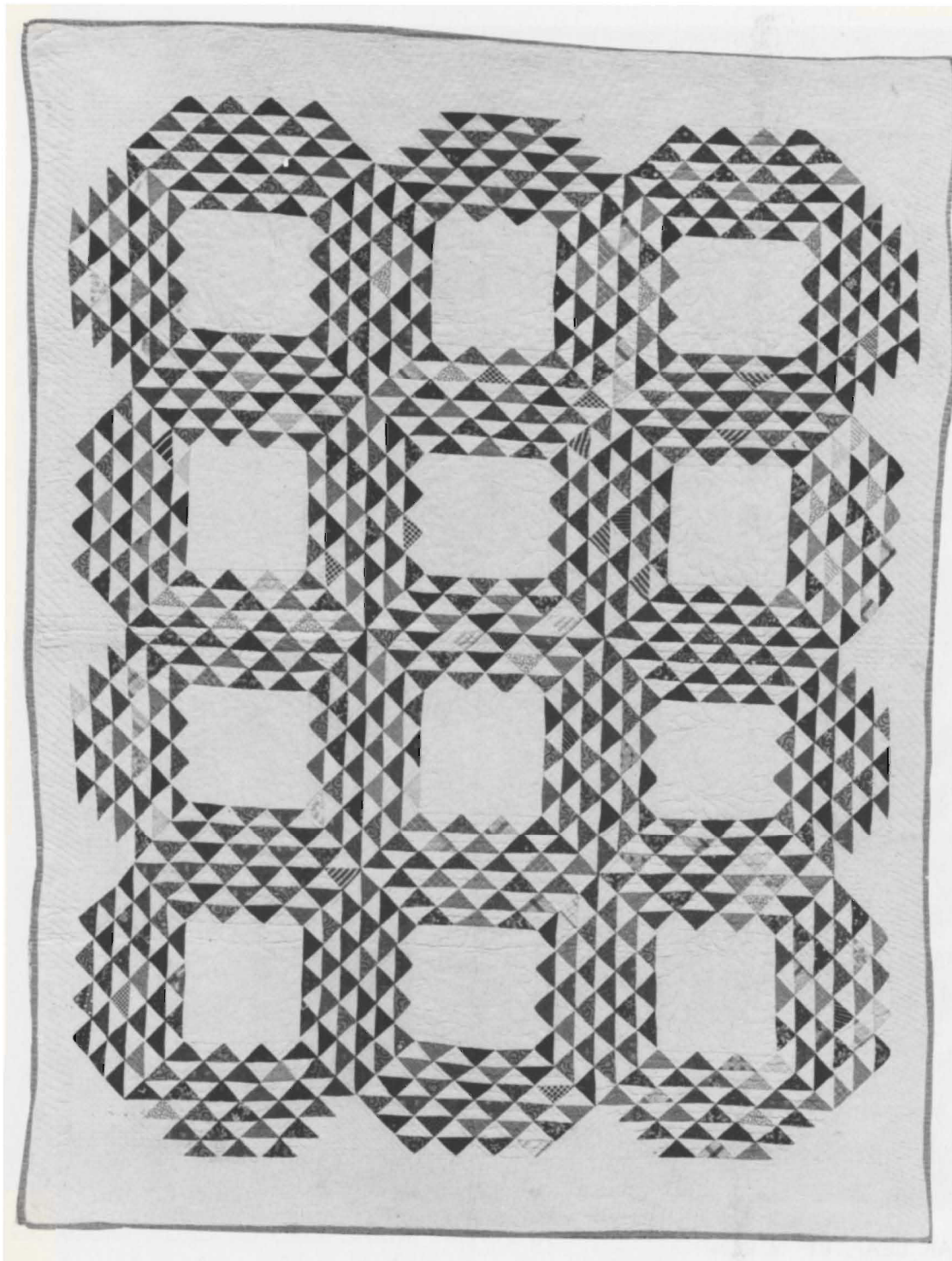
Owner: Mrs. Roscoe
C. Abbott, Lincoln

ROCKY ROAD TO CALIFORNIA, 74½" x 81"

Made in the 1890's.
Appliqued blue and white
calico with appliqued leaf
border.
Owner: Mrs. Charles F.
Craft, Roca



25. OAK LEAF, 81" x 97½"

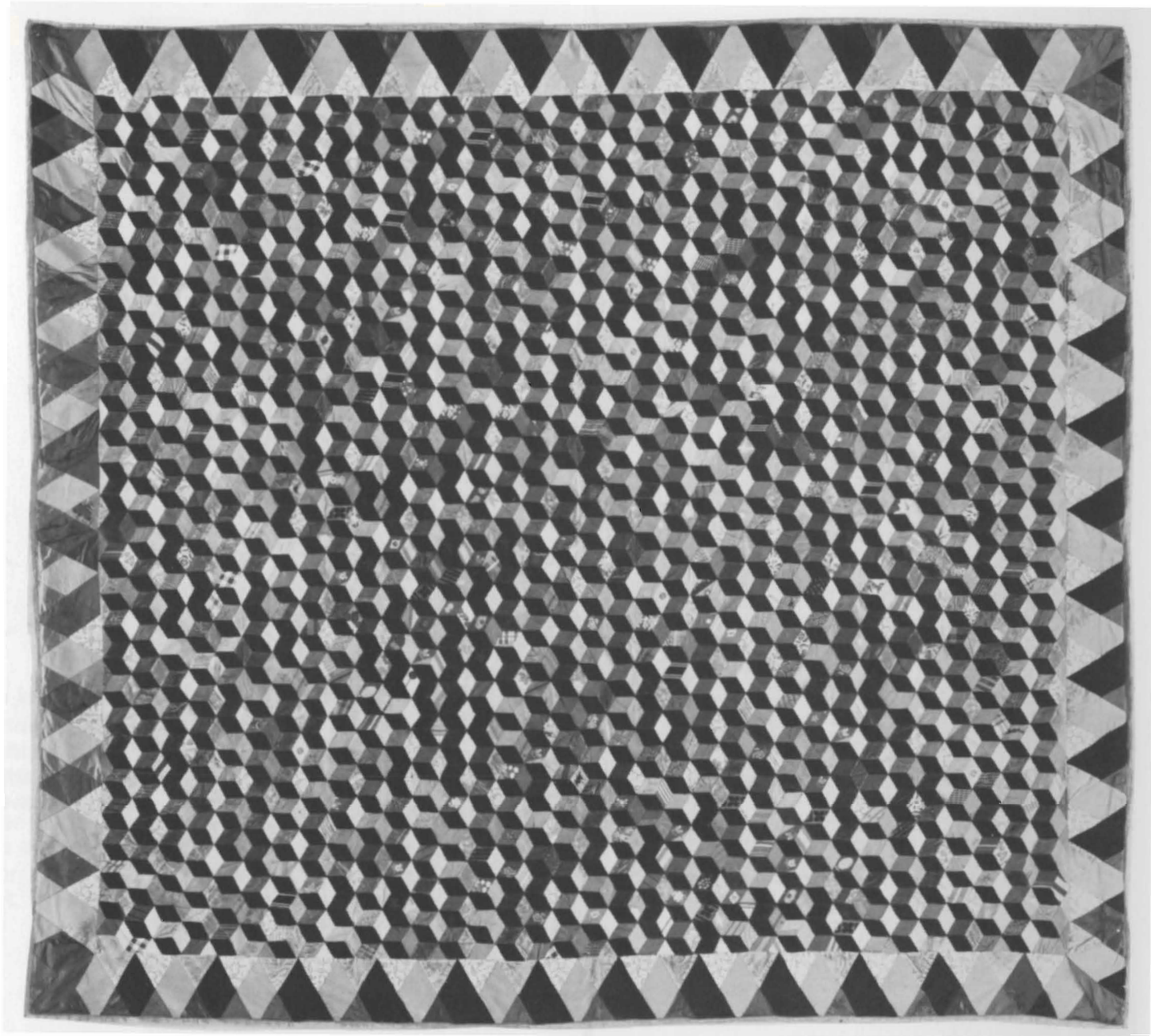


26. OCEAN WAVE, 65" x 85"

Made about 1900 by Mrs. Schanklin.

Multicolored calico triangles, white square blocks and red checked binding.

Owner: Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer, Grand Island

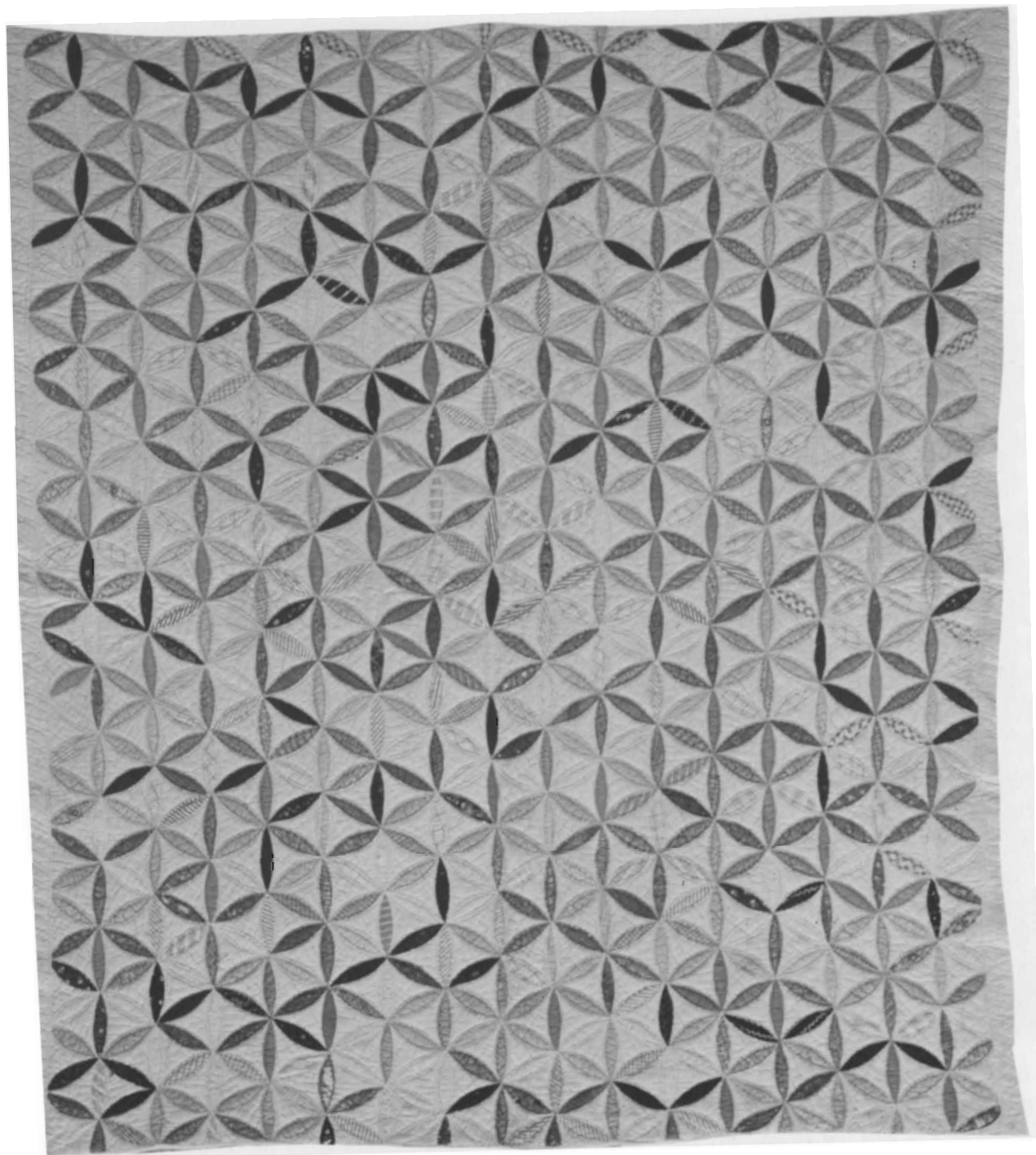


27. BABY BLOCKS, also called "Tumbling Blocks", 69½" x 77½"

Made in 1900 by Mary B. Moore.

The top is made of silk and velvet pieces. The lining is red silk. This pattern must be carefully pieced to make sure the corners come together exactly.

Owner: Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln



Made in the early
1900's.

Cotton prints.

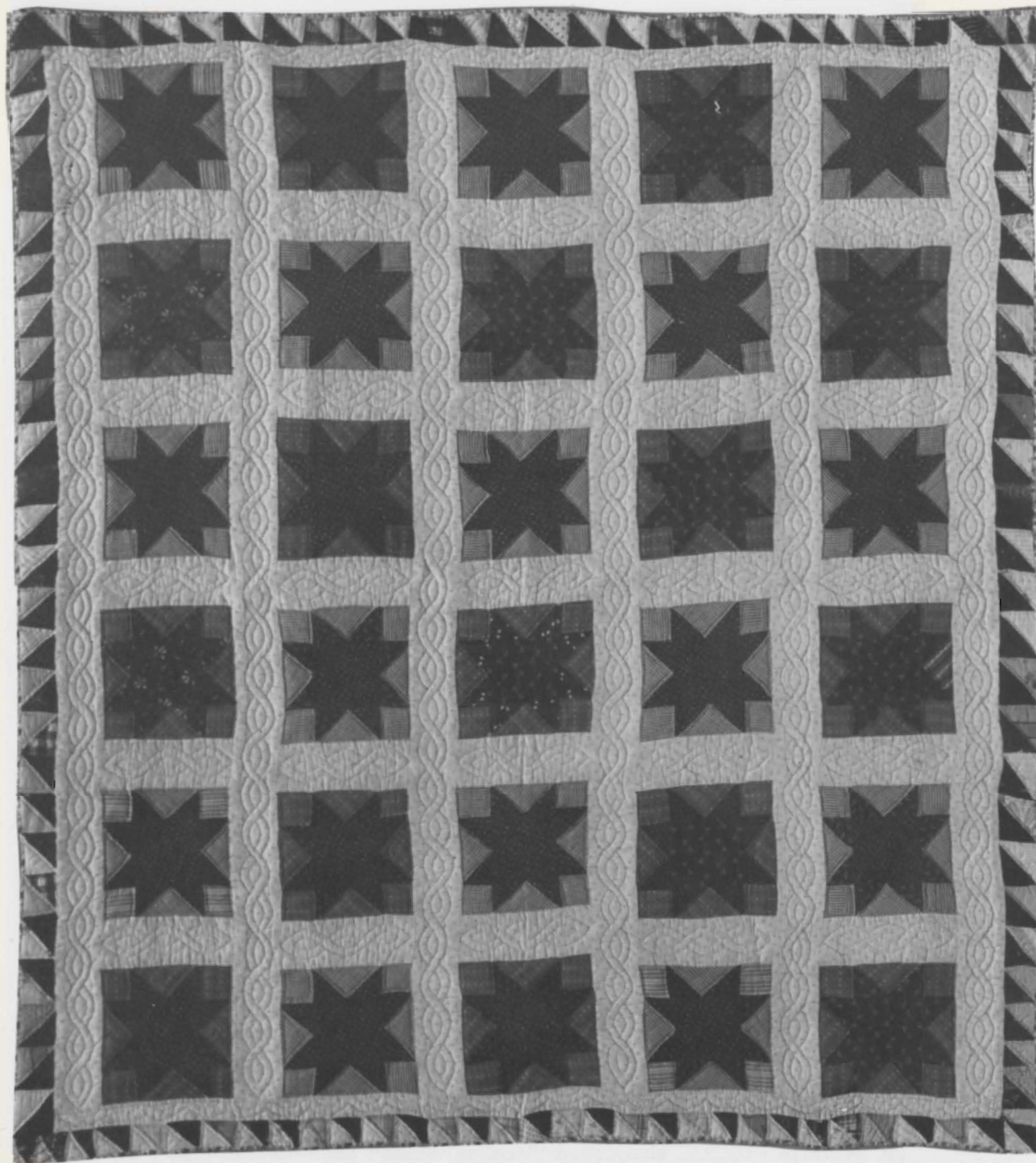
Owner: Mrs. Richard
S. Harnsberger, Lin-
coln

ORANGE PEEL, also known as "Daisy Chain", 71" x 79"

Made in the early 1900's.
An intricate all-over pattern
famous in pioneer days in
Indiana. The materials are
black and white prints, with
two bright orange squares
in the center.
Owner: Mrs. Sidney H.
Sweet, Lincoln



29. INDIANA PUZZLE, also called "Monkey Wrench" and "Snails Trail", 89" x 72½"



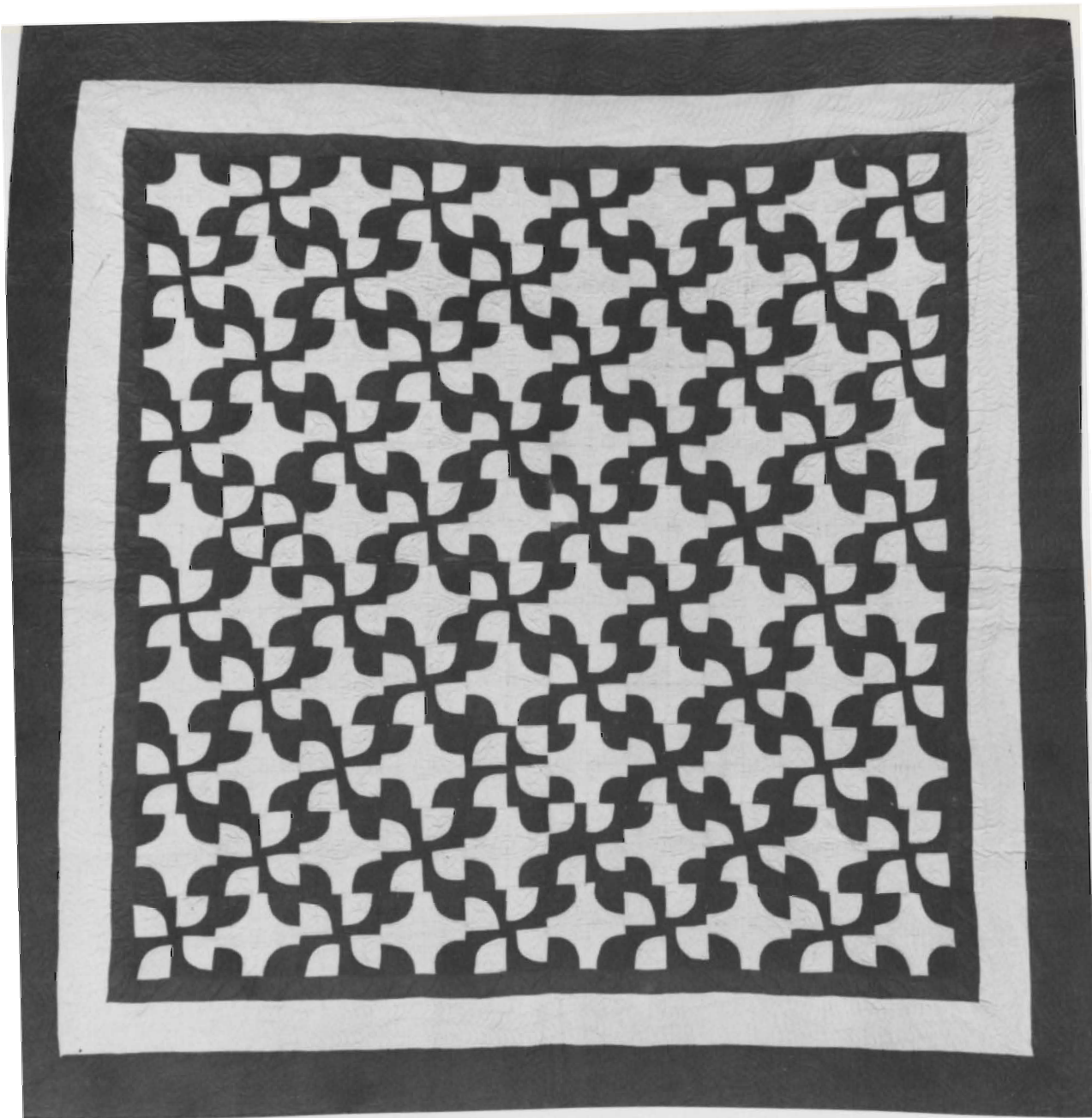
Made in the early 1900's by the owner's grandmother and great aunt.

The materials are from black print dresses. Has a pieced sawtooth border.

Owner: Mrs. Jack D. Campbell, Lincoln



31. ORIGINAL DESIGN, 74½" x 76"
Made in 1912 by Harriet Rogers.
Appliqued cotton and calico with trapunto.
Owner: Mrs. Ethel Gorham, Lincoln

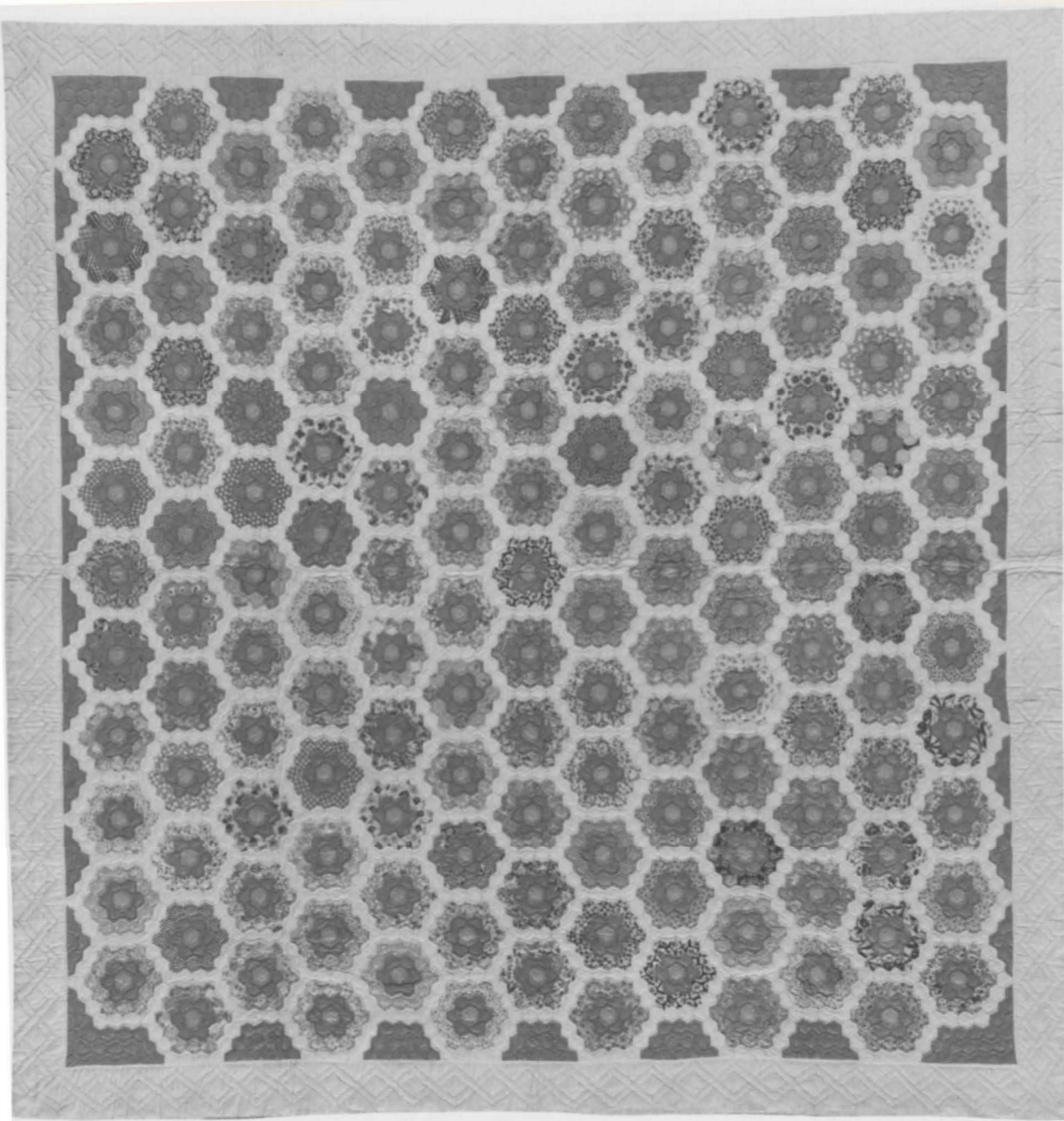


32. DRUNKARD'S PATH, also known as "Rocky Road to Dublin", "Fools Puzzle", "Wonder of the World", and others, 87½" x 92"

Made in 1920 by Mrs. C. J. Andrews.

This pattern is made of two units. Depending on the arrangement, it is known by various names. Made of red and gold percales. Each color quilted in matching thread.

Owner: Mrs. Margaret Ames Roehl, Lincoln



33. GRANDMOTHER'S FLOWER GARDEN, 84" x 87½"

Made in 1920 by Mrs. J. C. Dudley, Lincoln.

Each yellow center is surrounded by pink and then print. This pattern consists of one hexagon patch.

Owner: Miss Mathilda E. Welsch, Lincoln



34. SAWTOOTH STAR, 87½" x 87½"

Made in the 1920's.

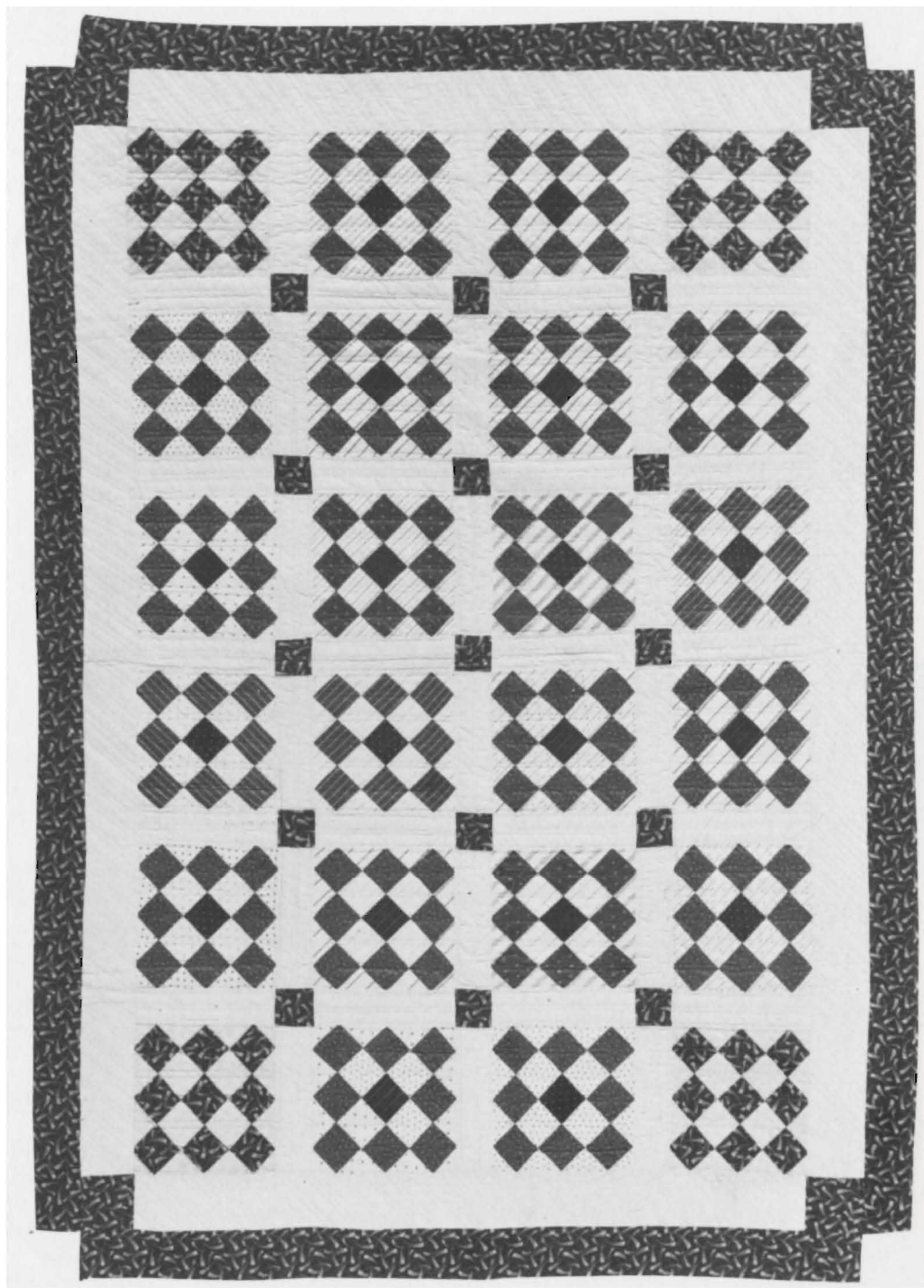
Made of brick calico print and white. Set together with white squares, each quilted with a different flower design. Matching sawtooth border.

Owner: Mrs. Sidney H. Sweet, Lincoln

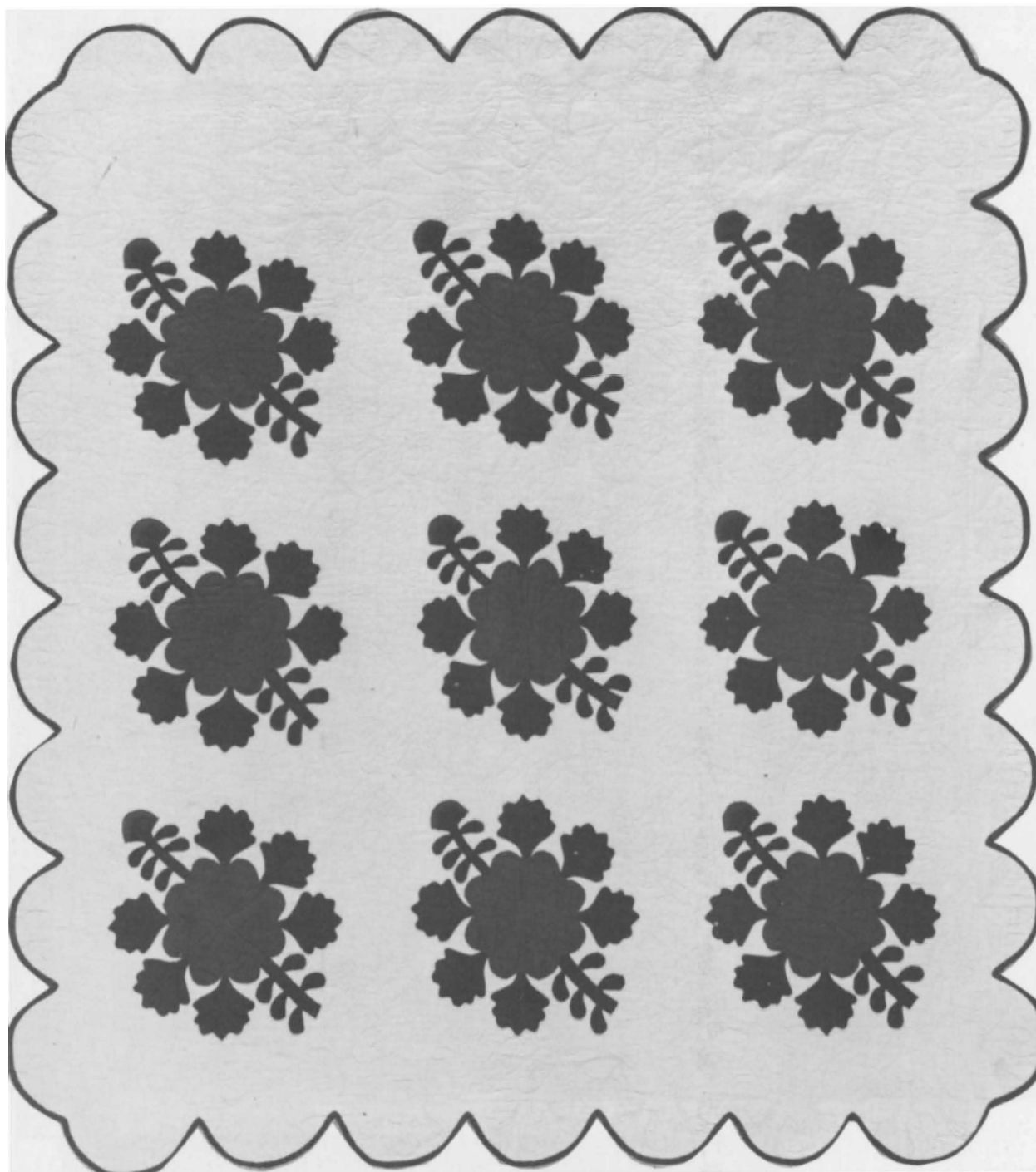
Made in the early 1920's by Emma Hansen Sveninsson of Wood River.

Dark blue calico pieced with light shirting. Set together with unbleached muslin. Blue calico border has interesting corner arrangement.

Owner: Mrs. Arthur Mayer, Grand Island



35. COURT HOUSE SQUARE, 60" x 86"

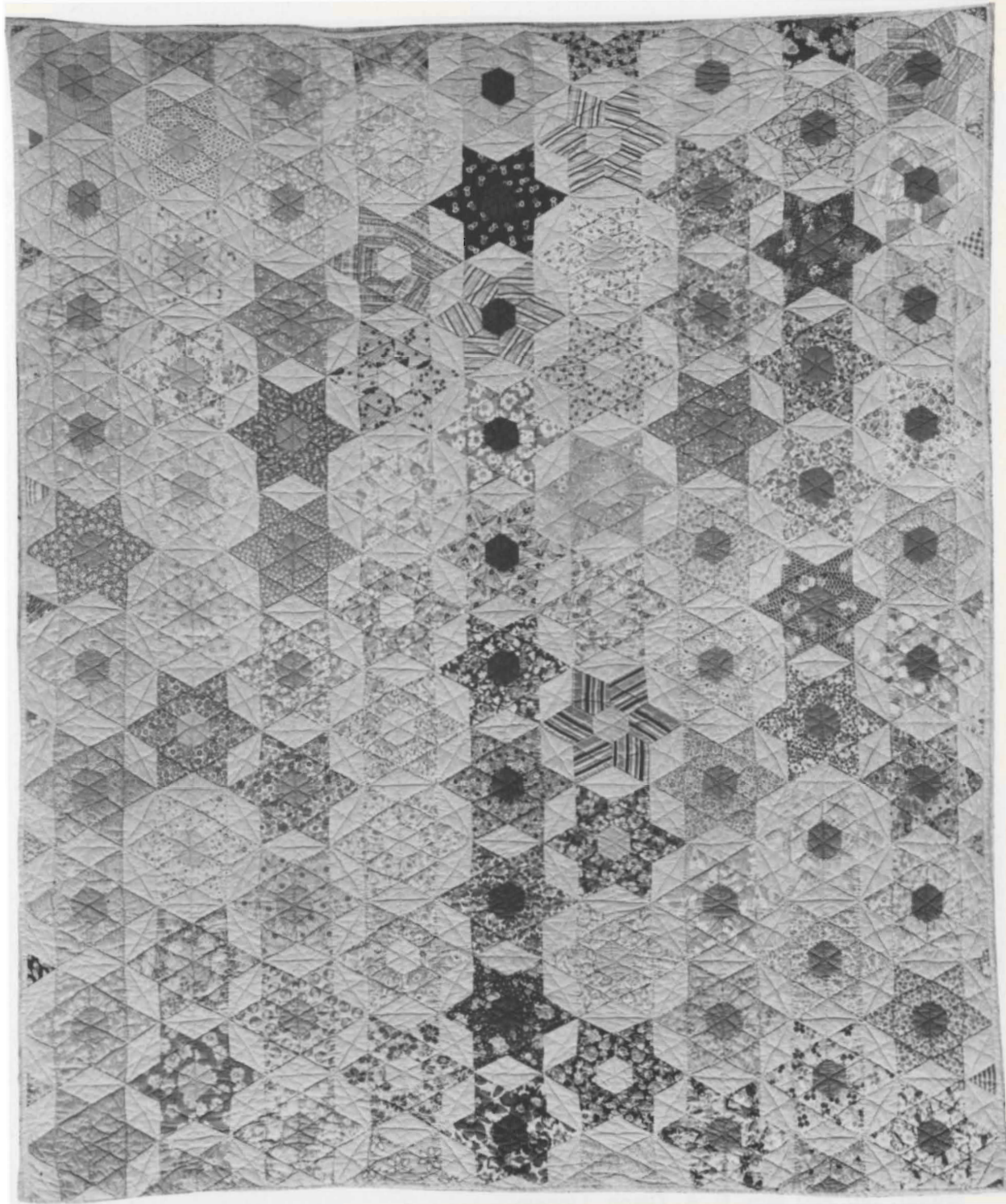


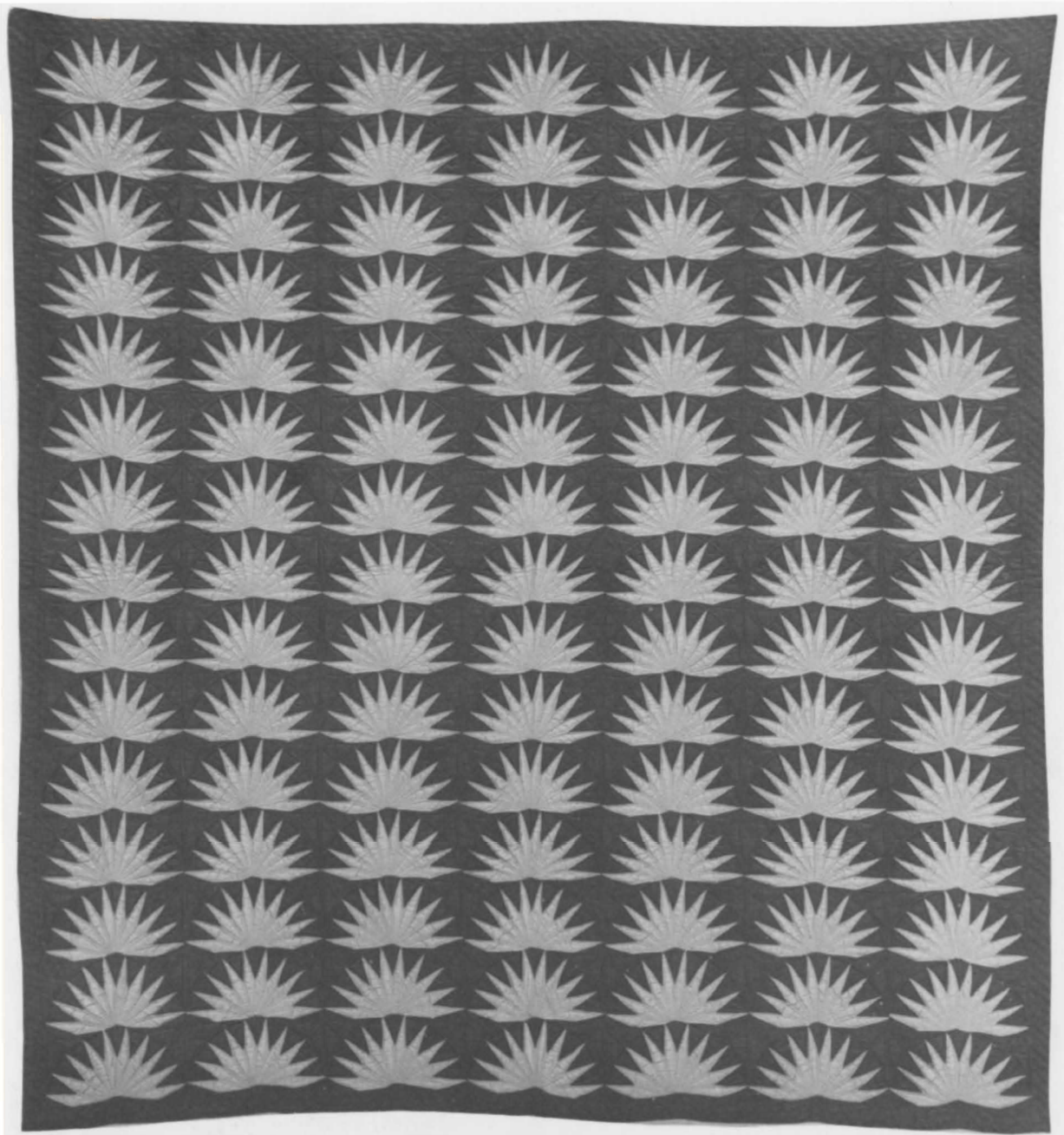
Made in 1925 by
Mrs. J. W. Tyler,
Auburn.

Appliqued red and
green cotton.

Owner: Brownville
Historical Society,
Brownville

Made about 1930 by
Edith and Mabel Kin-
ney of Elgin.
Owner: Miss Edith Kin-
ney, Elgin





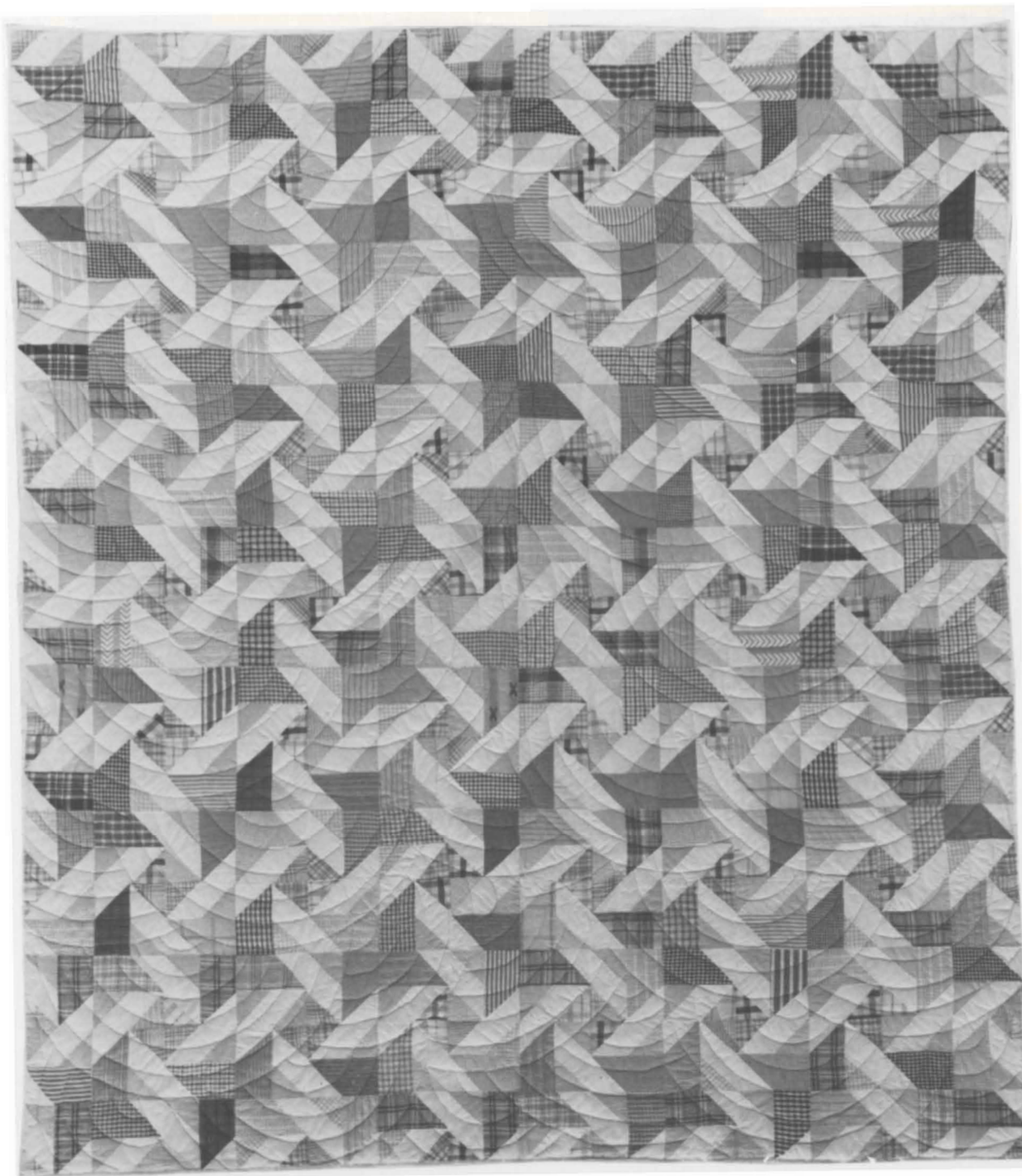
38. SUNRISE, 71" x 77½"

Made before 1930.

Purchased at an Amish auction in Iowa. Pieced of black and tan rayon and cotton. Lined with a red and black cotton print.

Owner: Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Olson, Lincoln

Made in 1930 by Bessie Zinky, Seward.
Multicolored plaids and checked gingham with white muslin. The circular quilting pattern provides an added dimension.
Owner: Mrs. Sidney H. Sweet, Lincoln



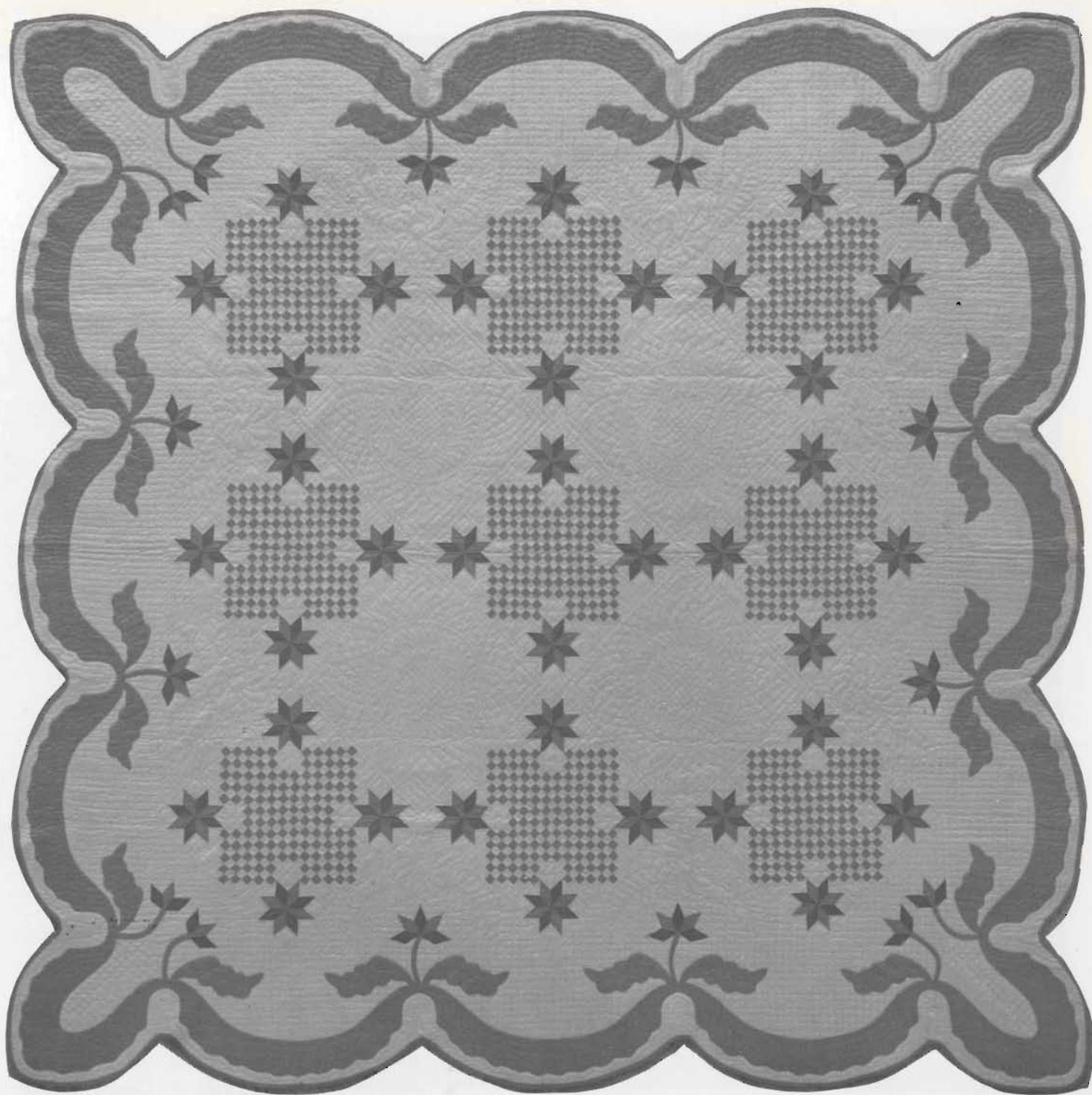
39. SHOOTING STAR, 79" x 90"

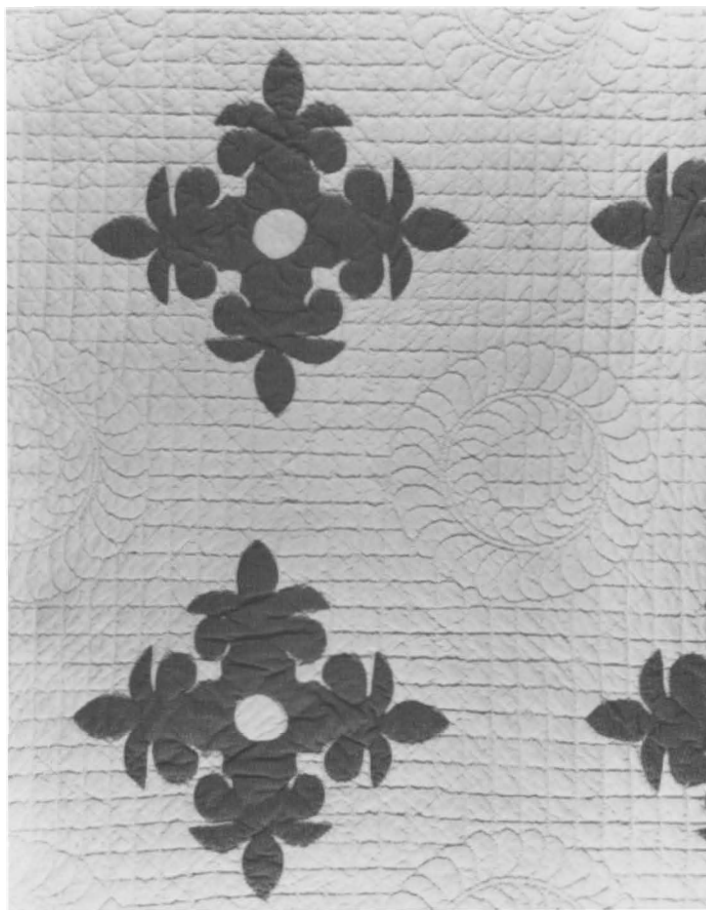
40. THE LINCOLN QUILT, 88½" x 90"

Made in 1930 by Grace Snyder.

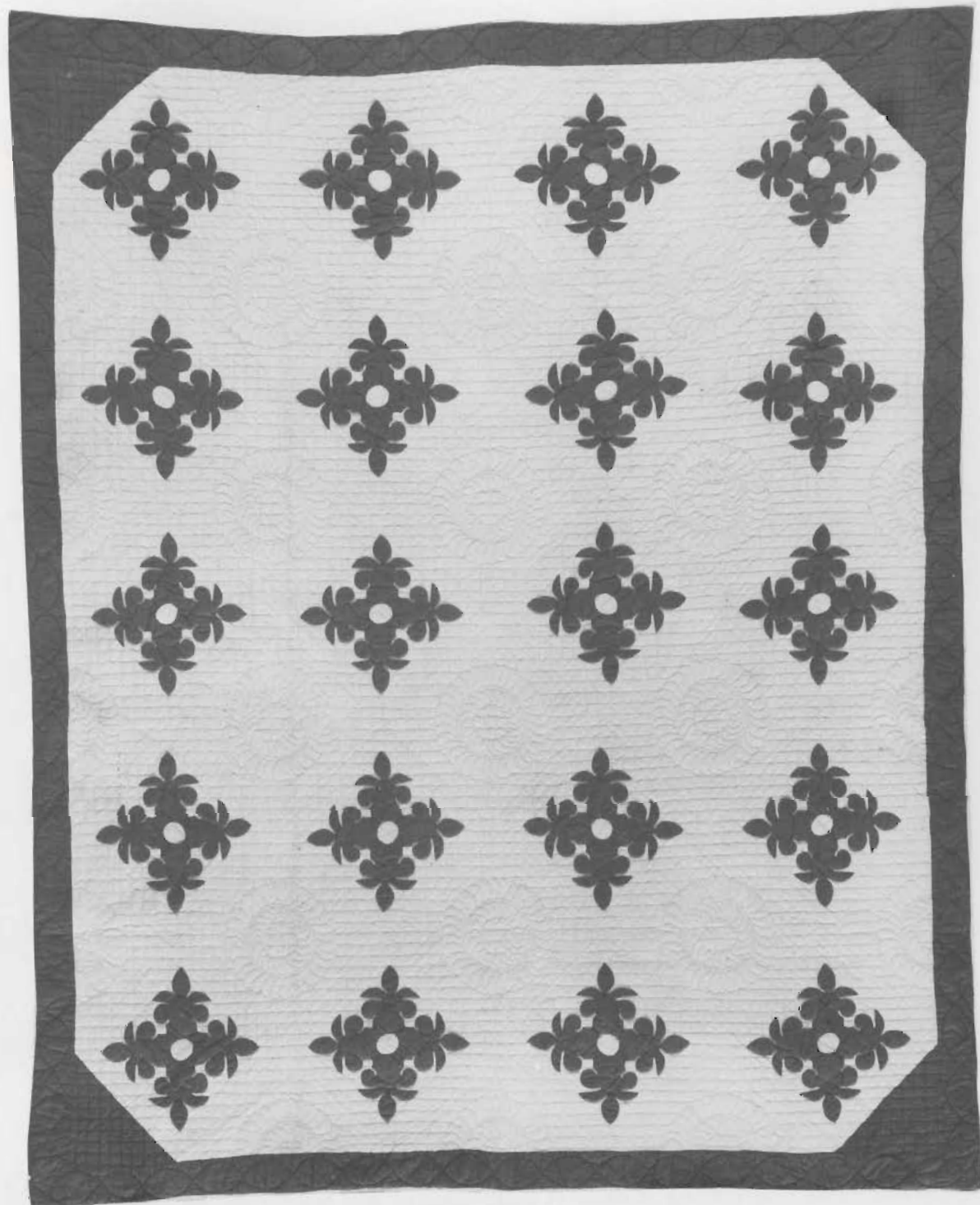
The pieced blocks are copied from a design said to have been originated by Abraham Lincoln's mother. Original designs on the white blocks. Applique swag border.

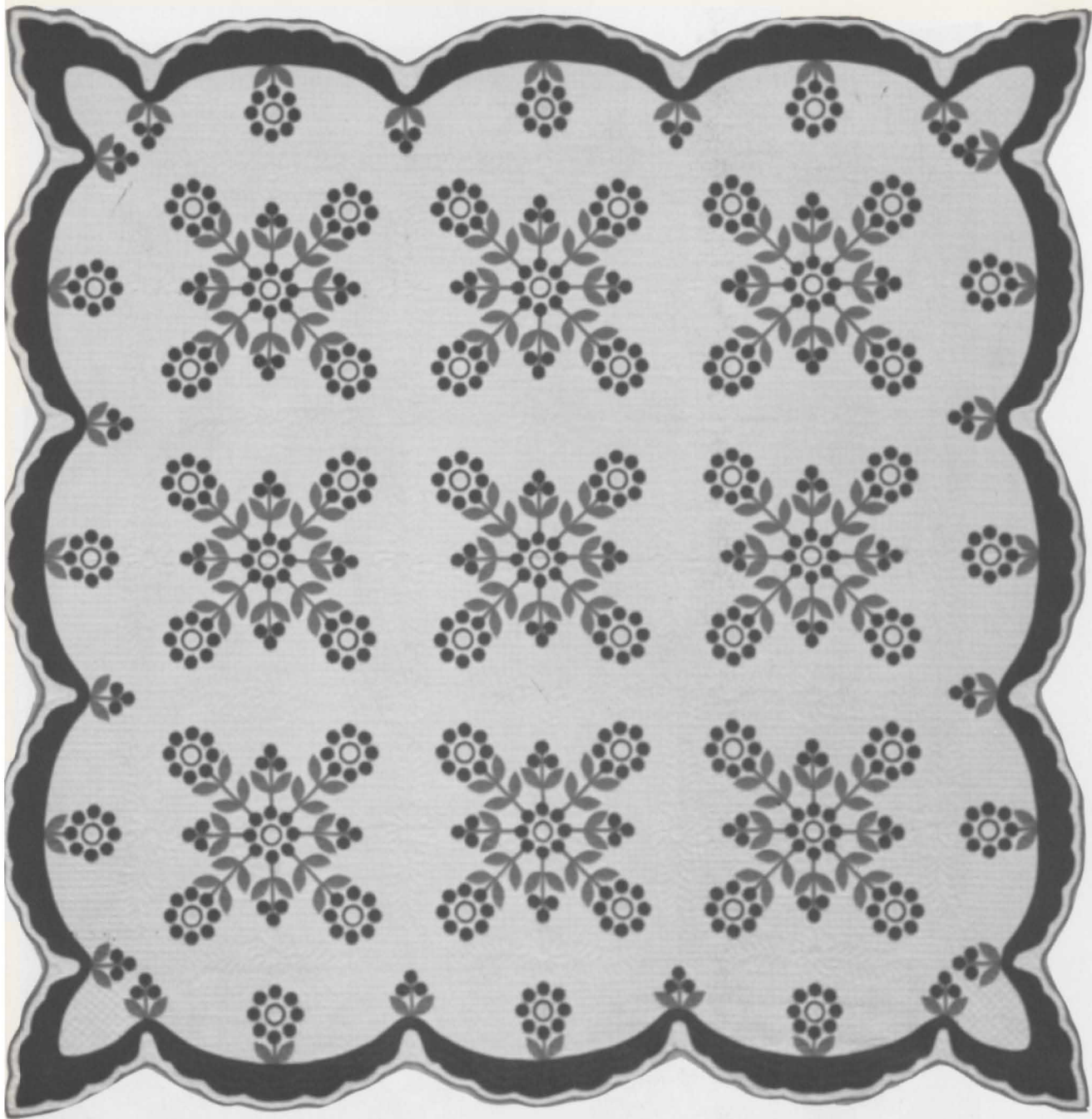
Owner: Mrs. Grace Snyder, North Platte





41. FLEUR-DE-LIS, 84" x 105"
Probably made in the 1930's.
Deep rose print applied on white.
Owner: Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Olson, Lincoln





42. MRS. MCGILL'S CHERRY QUILT, 91" x 90"

Made in 1933 by Grace Snyder of North Platte.

Red cherries appliqued on ivory percale. Maintaining a small perfect circle is a difficult applique technique. The quilting is done in small squares and feather design.

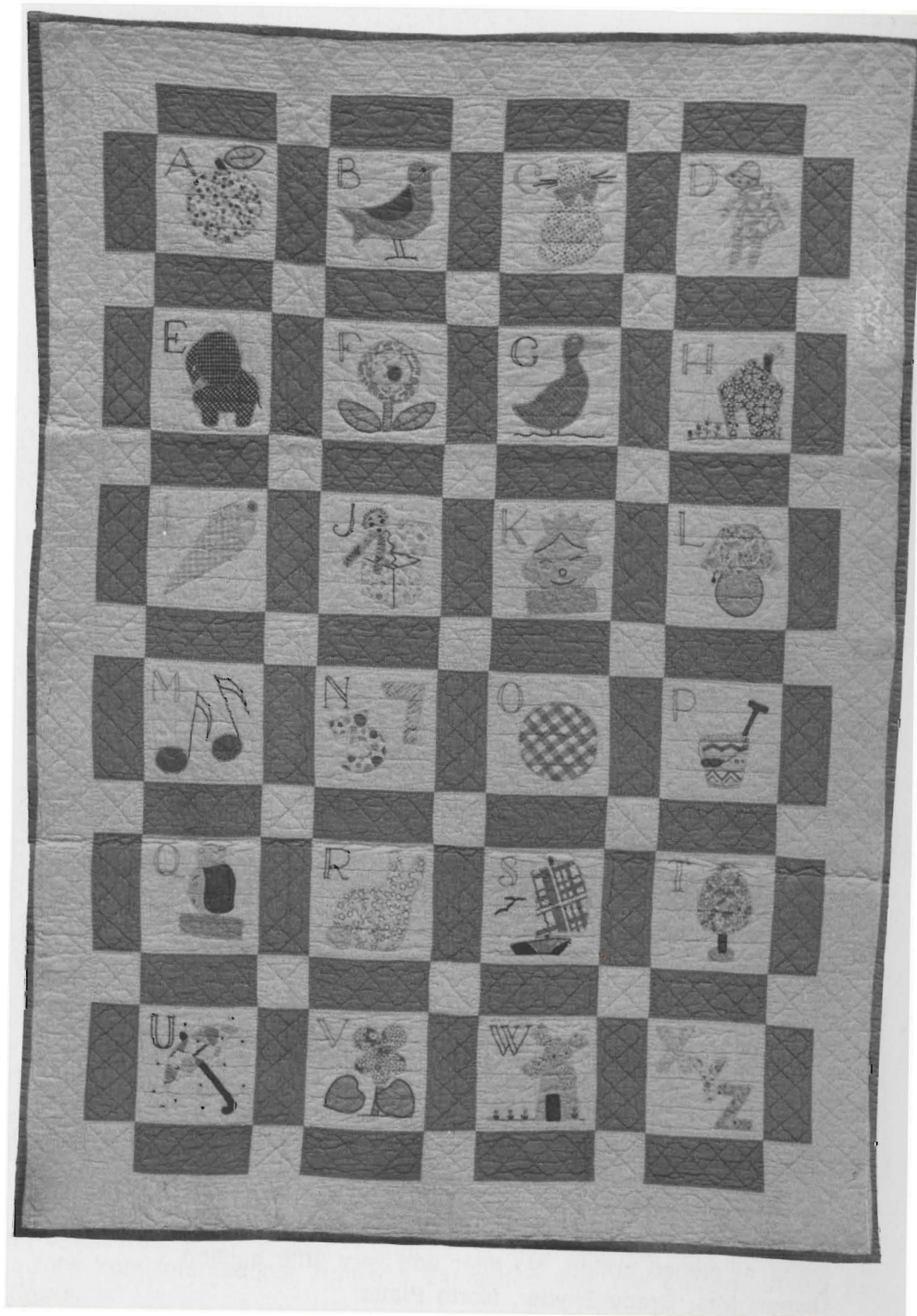
Owner: Mrs. Grace Snyder, North Platte

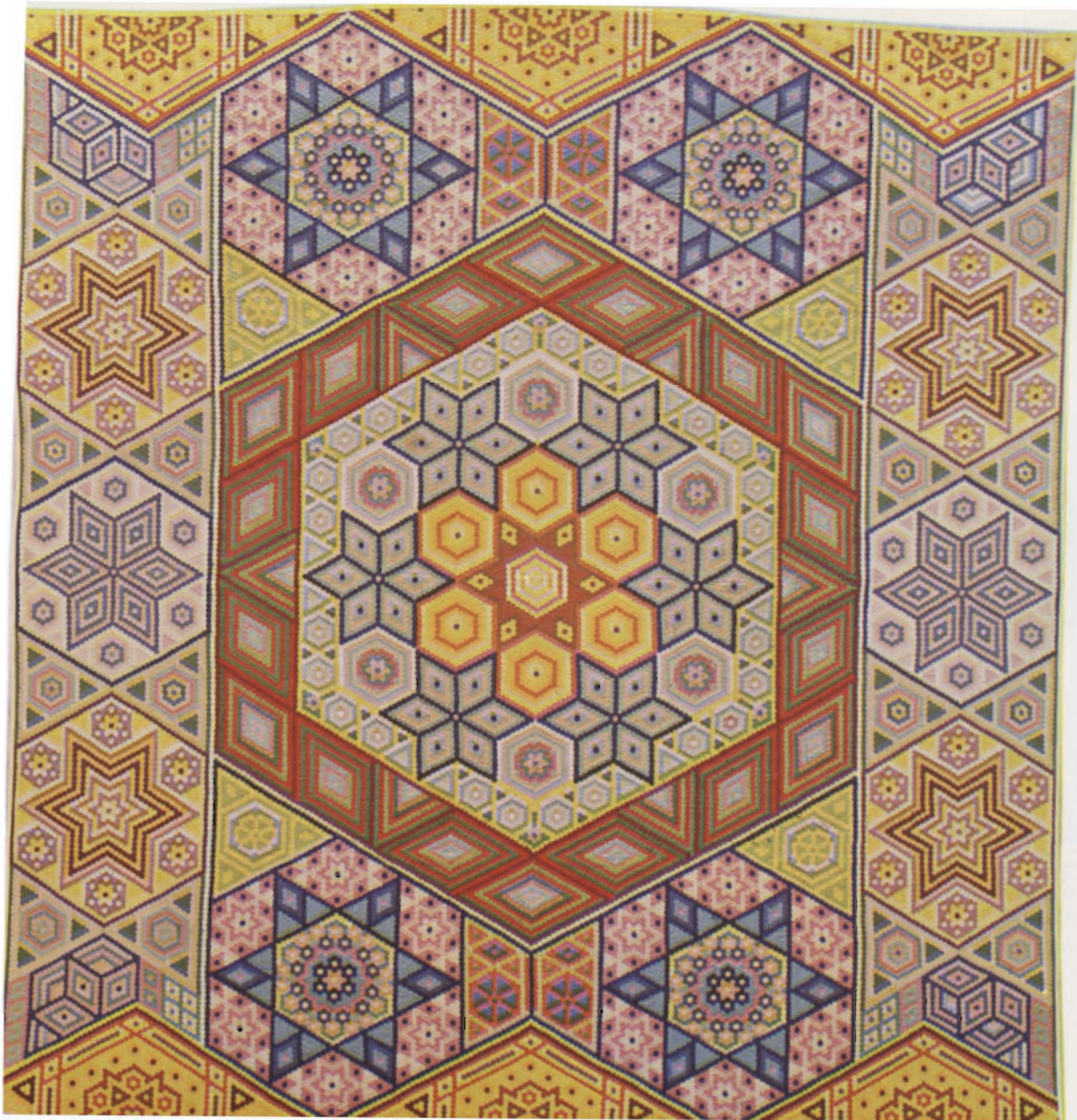
43. ALPHABET CRIB QUILT, 43" x 58½"

Made in 1936 by Mrs. Charles Coolidge, aunt of owner, and Mrs. Frank Babka, grandmother of owner.

Appliqued and embroidered motifs on white cotton blocks. Set together with blue.

Owner: Mr. Jon Nelson, Lincoln





44. MOSAIC HEXAGON, 89½" x 102½"
Made in 1941 by Grace Snyder.
Made of pieced cotton. No filler and very little quilting.
Owner: Mrs. Grace Snyder, North Platte

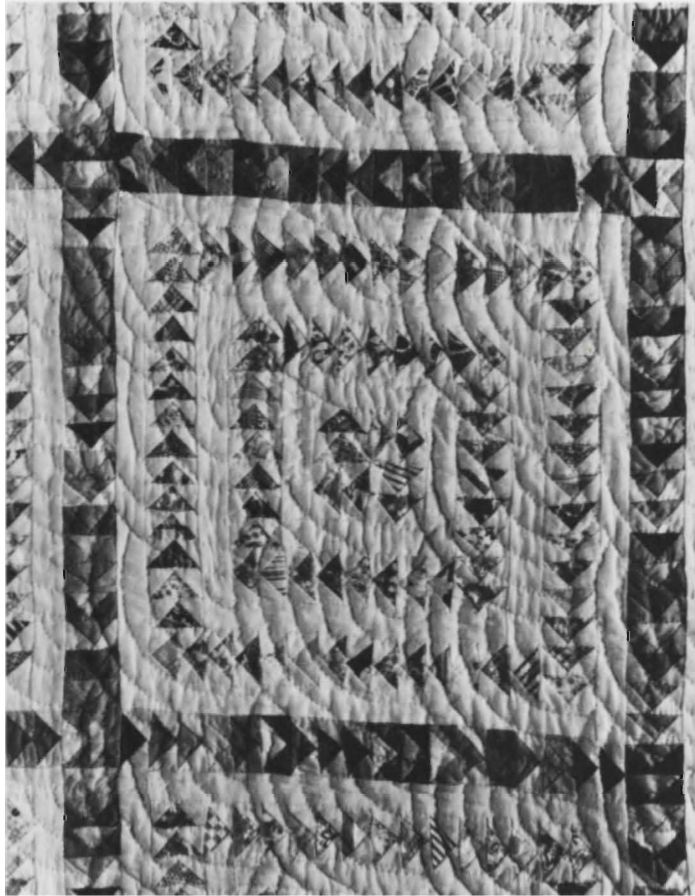


45. FLOWER BASKET PETIT POINT, 91" x 93½"

Made in 1942-43 by Grace Snyder.

Pieced of more than 87,000 pieces. Sixteen months in the making and requiring 5,400 yards of thread. From a pattern taken from a china plate. Contains no filler and has very little quilting. Awarded prizes at the New York International Women's Exposition and The Eastern States Exposition, Springfield, Mass.

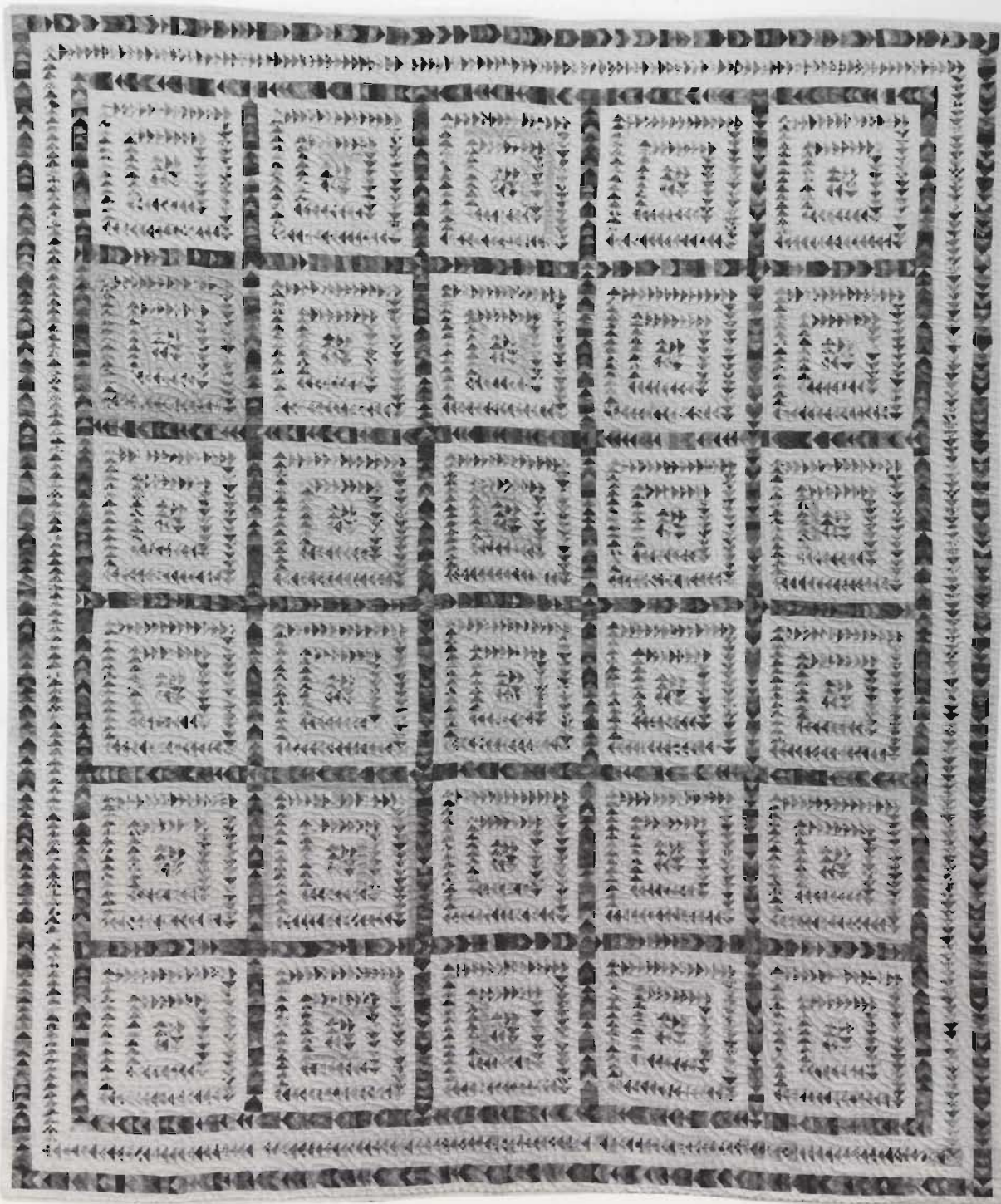
Owner: Mrs. Grace Snyder, North Platte

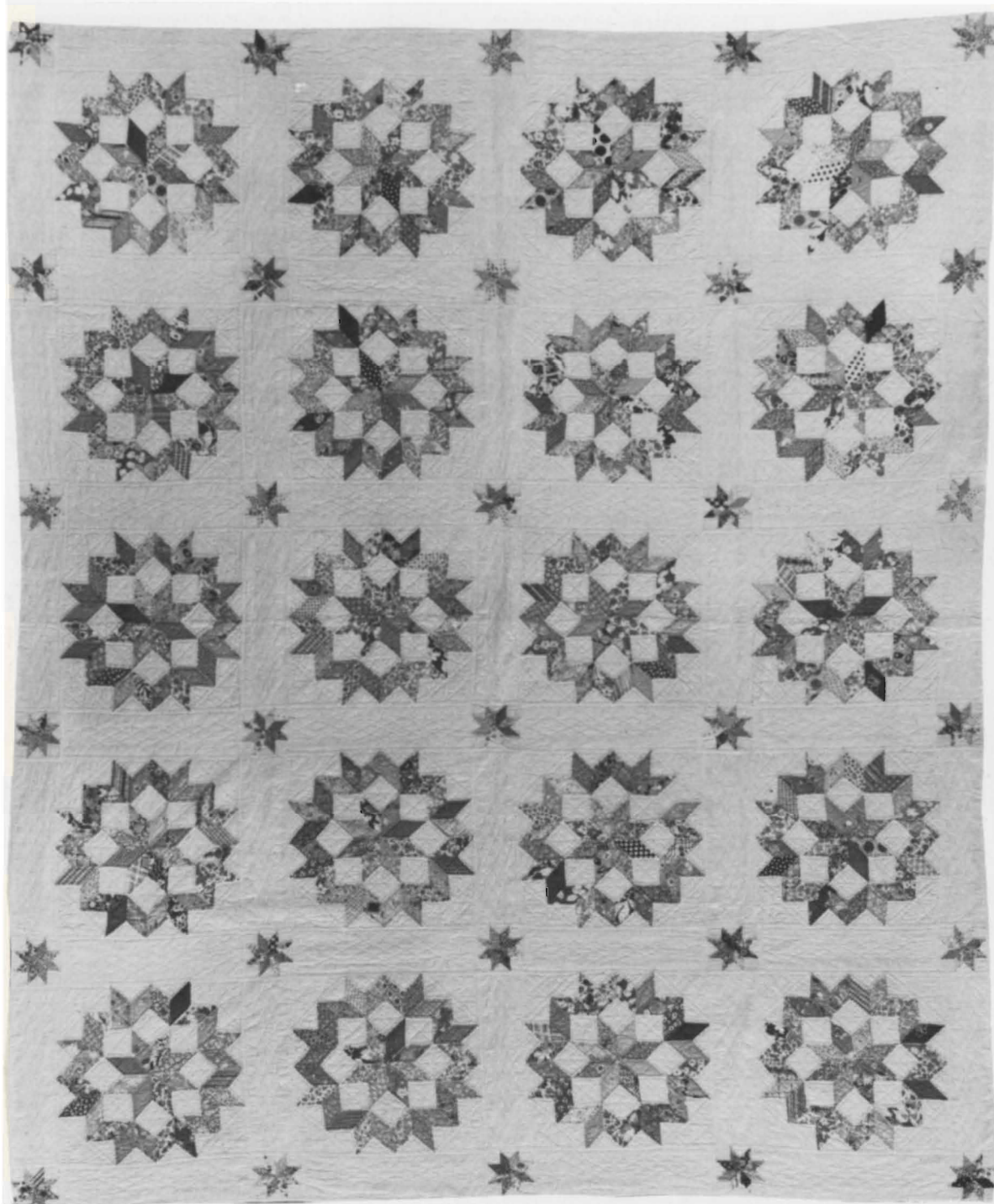


46. RETURN OF THE SWALLOWS, 69" x 82½"

Made in 1944 by Grace Snyder at the close of World War II when yard goods could no longer be bought in the shops, and she was down to "scraps left from her original store." Since the triangle symbolizes a bird to quilt makers, Mrs. Snyder named this quilt "Return of the Swallows." The birds all return to their starting point.

Owner: Mrs. Grace Snyder, North Platte





Made in 1960 by Louise Howey.

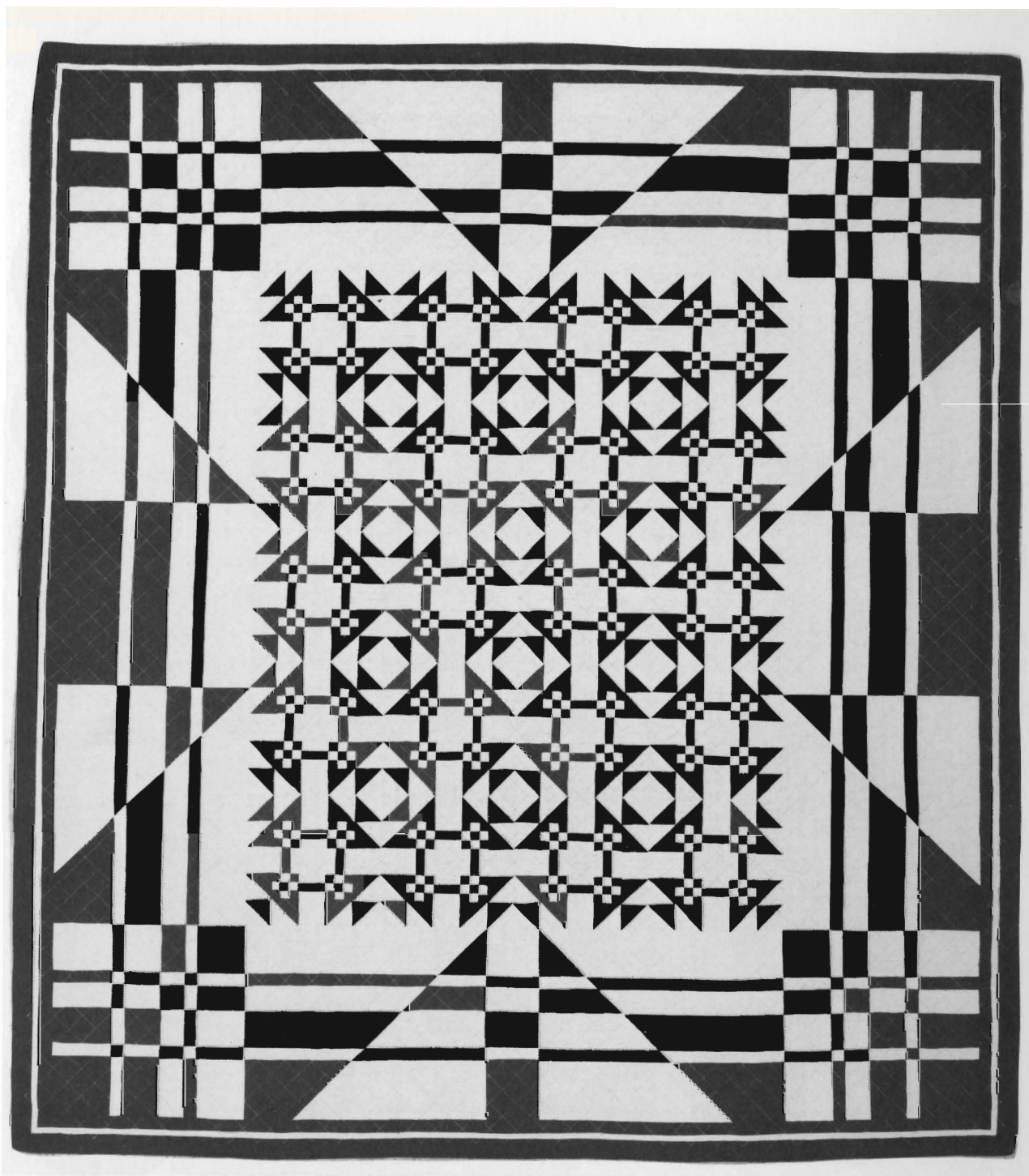
Assorted cotton prints set together with pieced miniature stars.

Owner: Mrs. Lowell Howey, Lincoln

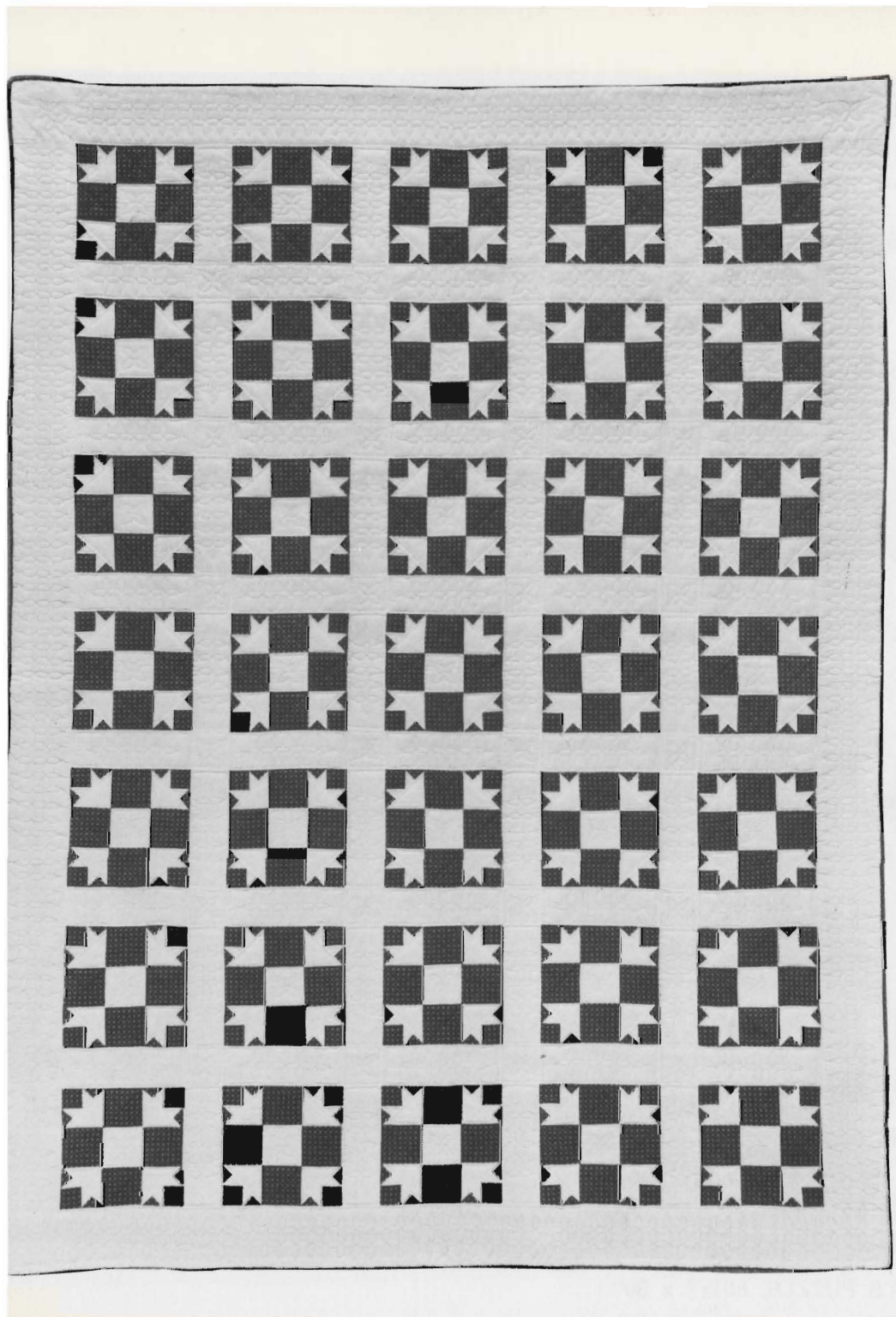
47. ECCENTRIC STAR, also called "Carpenter's Wheel" and "Dutch Rose", 75½" x 91½"

Made in 1968 by Ernest B. Haight. Very dark brown with white cotton percale. Machine pieced and machine quilted. The border is an original design.

Owner: Mr. Ernest B. Haight, Davis City



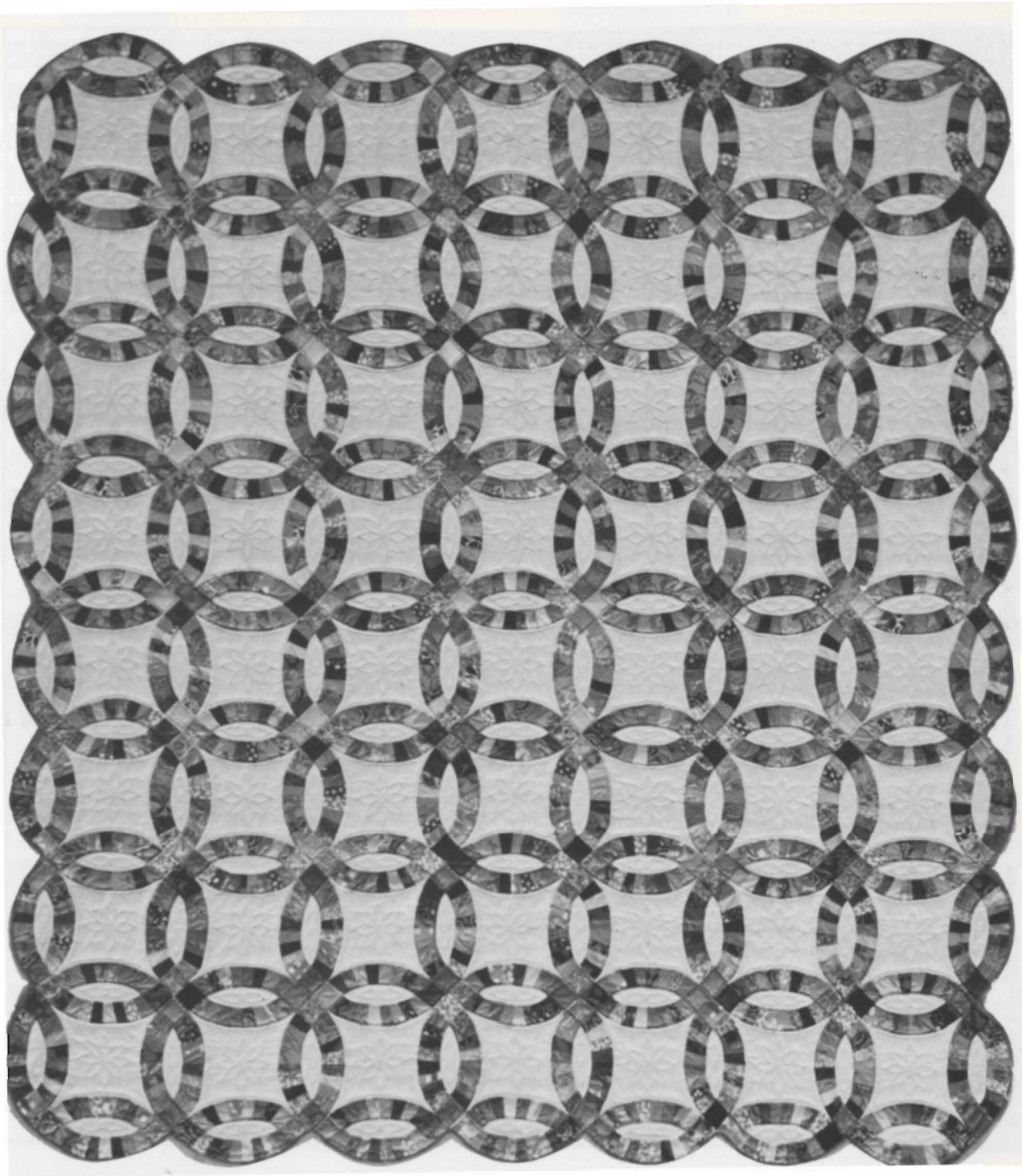
48. BACHELOR'S PUZZLE, 80½" x 90"



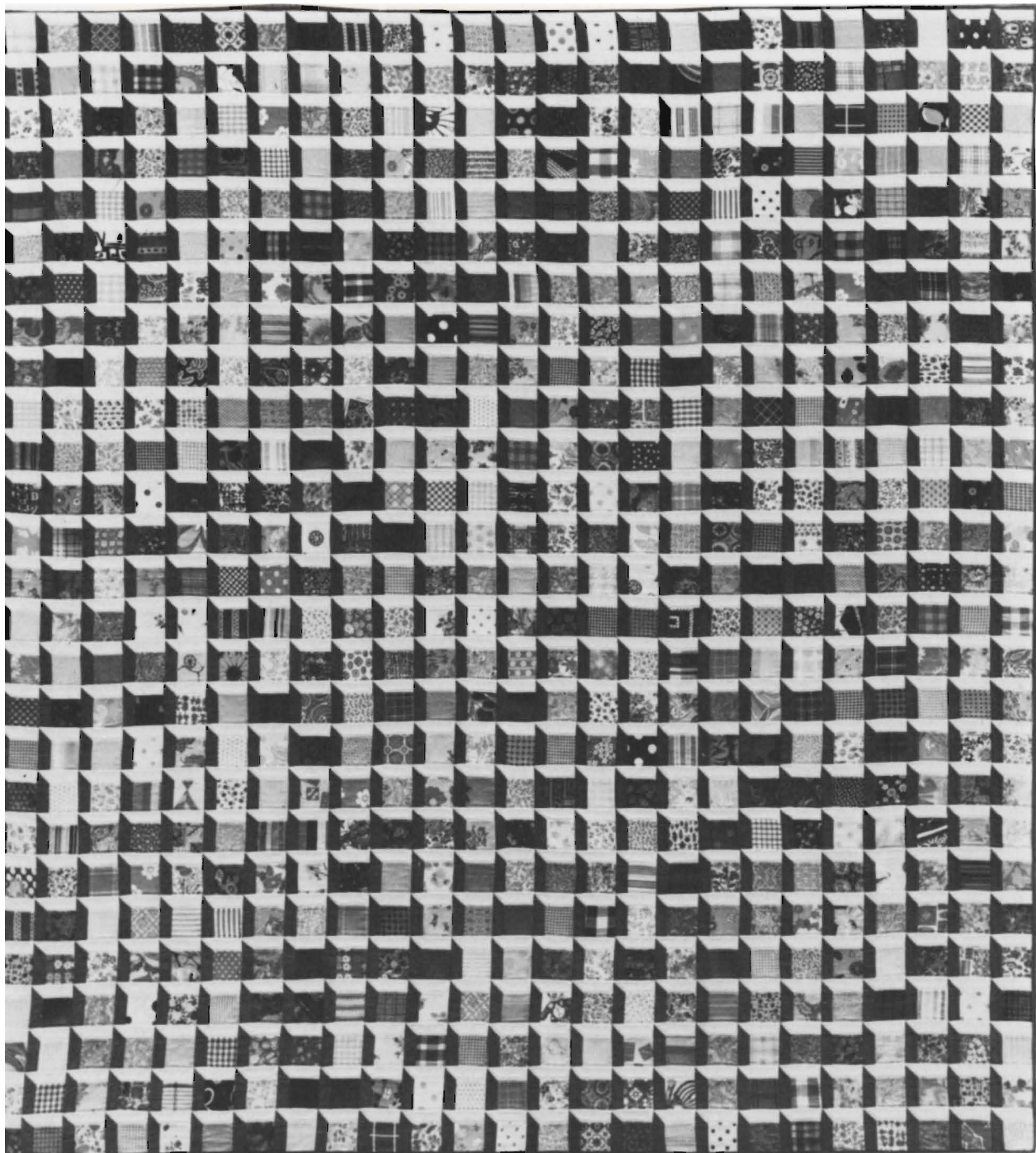
49. GOOSE TRACKS, 75½" x 102½"

Made in 1968 by Mary Ghormley.
Pieced red print percale with white.
Owner: Mrs. Roger Ghormley, Lincoln

Made in 1970 by
Mrs. Harry Waltz.
Pieced cotton prints
with white sateen.
Owner: Mrs. Harry
Waltz. Lincoln



50. DOUBLE WEDDING RING, 89½" x 108"



Made in 1971 by
Mrs. Paul Virus.

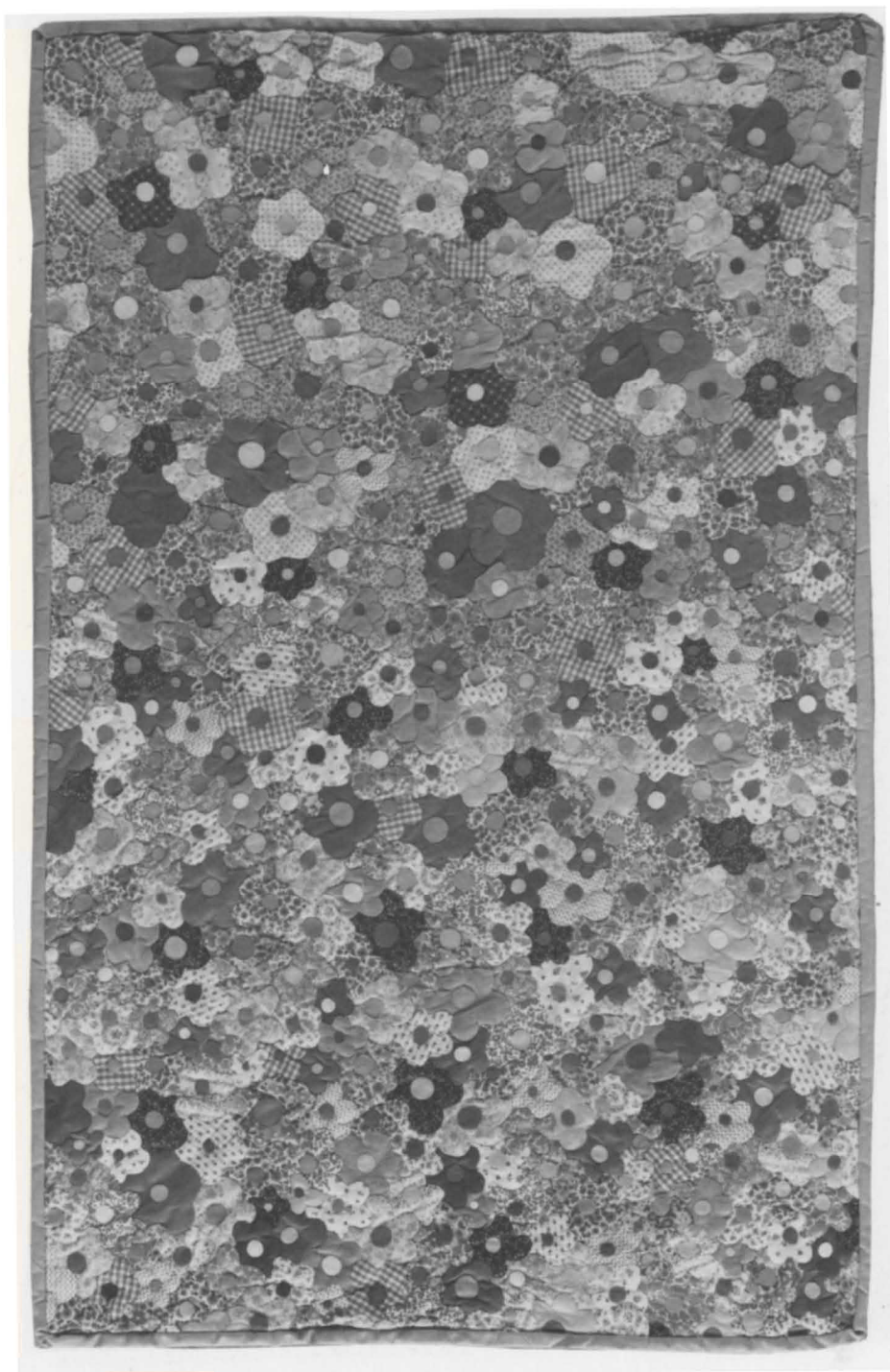
Cotton prints with
brown and white.
The dark and light
arrangement creates
the optical illusion
of a box.

Owner: Mrs. Paul
Virus, Deshler

[illegible]

Applied scraps on used blue denim, includes family names and initials. The blocks are outlined in embroidery stitches and tied at the corners.

Owner: Mrs. Roger Ghormley, Lincoln



53. BLUE EYED SUSANS, 58½" x 92½"

Made in 1973 by Mrs. Eames Irvin.

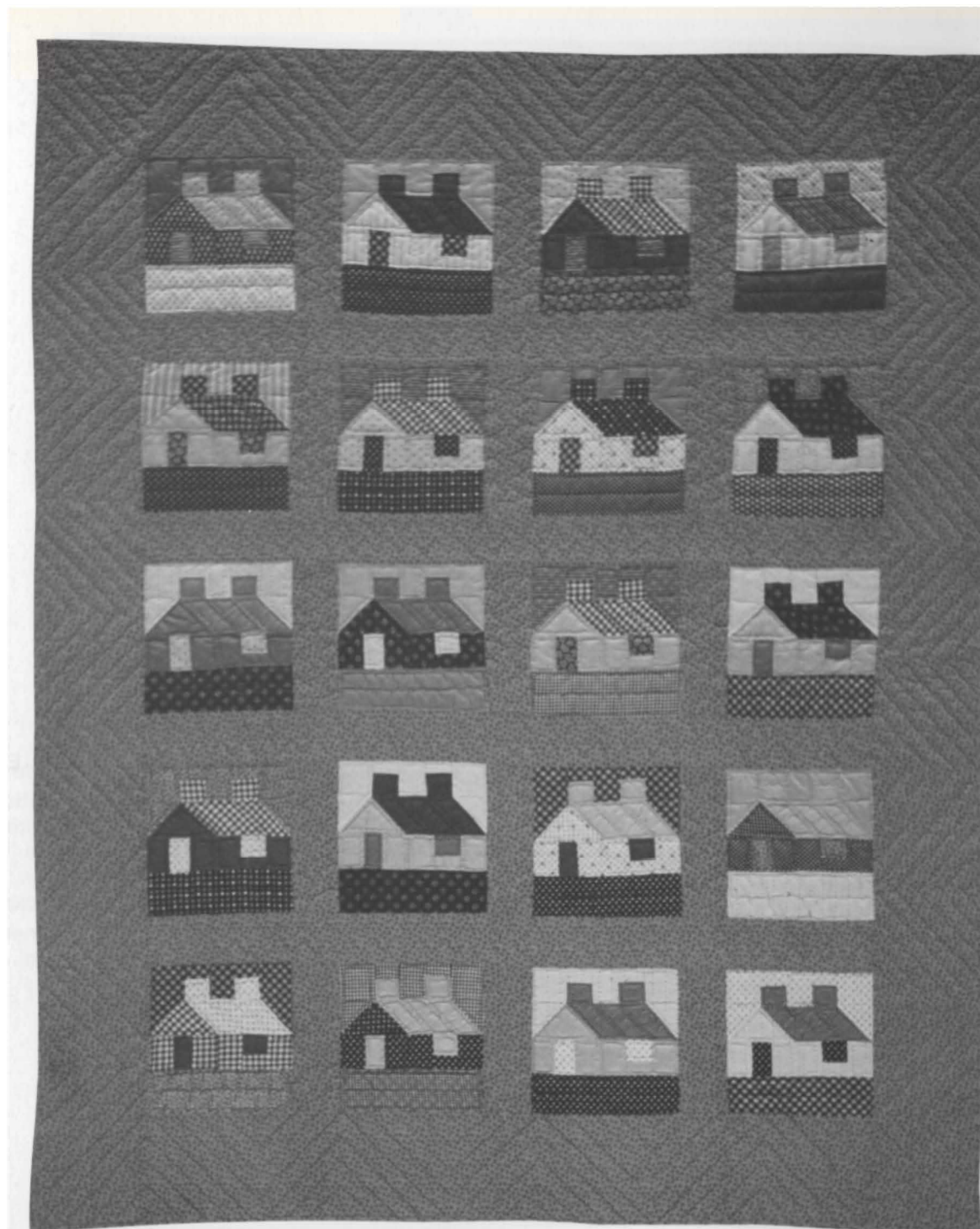
Overlapping appliquéd flowers of a variety of materials: cotton, polyester blends, corduroy, flannel, felt and gingham in shades of blue, green and lavender.

Owner: Miss Susan Irvin

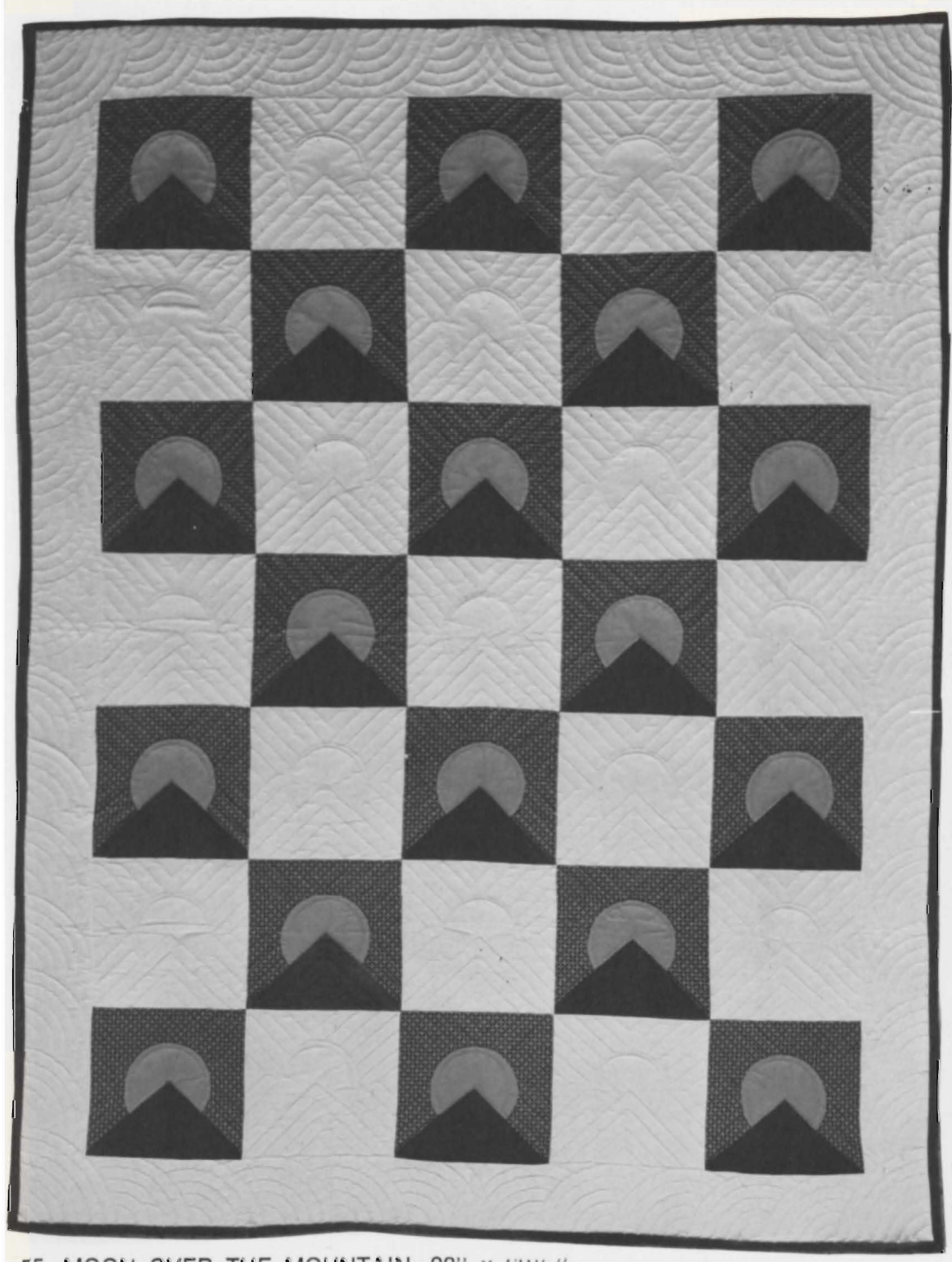
Made in 1973 by Elizabeth
Wanamaker, Lincoln.

Blue and white houses on
yellow background. The yel-
low print is continued in the
lining.

Owner: Miss Mary Jane
Colleran, Lincoln



54. HOUSE ON THE HILL, 98" x 77"



Made in 1974 by Sally Campbell.
 Applique design using cotton and denim. The background square of blue print represents the Milky Way. The quilting in the plain blocks repeats the applique design. Owner: Miss Amy Campbell, Lincoln

55. MOON OVER THE MOUNTAIN, 92" x 69 1/2"

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Two thousand copies of this catalogue printed by Lincoln Yearbook Company,
Lincoln, Nebraska

Kaz Tada, photographer.