

{AmQuilts labels ED-final.docx}

NOTE: EACH LABEL SHOULD HAVE A THUMBNAIL IMAGE OF THE QUILT (OVERALL) ON THE LABEL TO FACILITATE IDENTIFICATION.

Maryland

**Baltimore signature album quilt top, 1844–45**

Cotton; pieced, appliquéd, embroidered, and inscribed

Gift of Stanley H. Brackett in memory of Lois Martin Brackett 75.9.1

Thirty-six women made this quilt top, each contributing a unique square, which she signed. Signature album quilts were a collective form of remembrance—a record of the names, kind sentiments, and sewing skills of a group of friends. Such quilts became popular in the 1840s, a period of national expansion when many people, moving westward, desired a material reminder of the communities they left behind.

Album quilts were especially popular in Baltimore, where the Methodist Church had a strong presence. Methodist ministers had to move to a different congregation every year, and on their arrival or departure they often received an album quilt from the congregation. This quilt top was not completed with a backing, so it likely was never presented to the intended recipient.

{125 words}

Pennsylvania

**Double Irish Chain variation quilt, c. 1940–60**

Cotton; pieced and quilted

Gift of Dr. Richard L. Simmons in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Minneapolis Institute of Art 2015.74.2

Though its vibrant colors are eye-catching, this quilt is most significant for its design: a variation on the Irish Chain, a pattern popular in the United States since the early 1800s. In a traditional Irish Chain, the squares form a diamond pattern. Here, the pattern has been transformed into a vertical-horizontal grid by rotating the squares a quarter turn (setting them “on point,” in quilting terminology). This shows how a quilter could improvise and personalize her design while maintaining cherished communal patterns.

The name Irish Chain originated in the United States. In Ireland, the pattern was known simply as “patching.” When waves of Irish immigrants arrived in the United States in the early 1800s with their cherished patch quilts, the name “Irish Chain” emerged.

{124 words}



The diagonal diamond-shaped patterning here is typical of the Irish Chain design. *Double Irish Chain quilt*, c. 1860–80 (1997.007.0018). Photo: International Quilt Study Center and Museum, Nebraska

United States

**LeMoyne Stars quilt**, c. 1880–90

Cotton; pieced and quilted

Gift of Robert and Carolyn Nelson 2004.174.25

Pieced quilts, such as this, require fabric components that are uniform in shape and size. Variations can distort the overall design. To ensure standardization, quilters often use templates to cut fabric pieces accurately. In the late 1800s, templates were cut from sheets of tin or paper. Today, they are often made from plastic.

The LeMoyne Star pattern was, and still is, widely used throughout much of the United States. LeMoyne stars have eight points composed of diamond-shaped pieces of fabric. By alternating red and blue fabric, the quilter made these stars look like pinwheels in motion.

{96 words}

**Mary Ellen Jones**

American (Maine), born 1839

**Cherry quilt**, 1859

Cotton; pieced, appliquéd, and quilted

Gift of funds from the Minnesota Quilters 86.28

Mary Ellen Jones completed what she called her “cherry quilt” in 1859, when she was twenty years old. Typically, quilts have three layers: a cloth top; a middle layer of cotton batting, cloth, or even paper; and a cloth backing. This one lacks a middle layer, a design choice that facilitated Jones’s fine stitching. She packed up to fourteen tiny stitches into one inch of hand quilting. Today, expert hand quilters aim for ten stitches per inch. The original fabric glazing—shiny areas on the cloth’s surface—is still present, suggesting that the quilt was never washed and that it was made for display, not for use as a blanket.

The appliquéd leaves (resembling grape rather than cherry leaves) enliven the symmetrical design. The color scheme reflects the craze for red and green quilts that swept the United States in the mid-1800s.

{142 words}

United States

**Star quilt**, late 1800s

Cotton; pieced and quilted

Gift of Richard and Roberta Simmons 91.175.1

Pieced stars were popular in the United States from the 1840s to 1875, perhaps owing to the influence of kaleidoscopes. First manufactured in 1816, kaleidoscopes were perfected in the following decades.

For this quilt, scores of red, white, and blue diamond-shaped fabric pieces were painstakingly stitched together. The alternating bands of color create a pulsating effect, like a glowing sun. Signs of heavy washing tell us this quilt functioned as a bedcover. Though delicately constructed, it was still expected to withstand the rigors of daily use.

{86 words}

Vermont

**Quilt**, c. 1890

Wool; appliquéd, pieced, and embroidered

Gift of The Regis Foundation 2002.248

The stylized birds and berries here have more in common with New England folk art than with traditional fine quilts. Perhaps most unusual is the use of felt for the stuffed appliquéd birds and berry sprigs.

Typically, appliqué motifs are cut from woven fabrics, the edges are turned under to prevent raveling, and the piece is then stitched to the ground fabric. Because felt is matted and pressed, rather than woven, the edges do not ravel, and the quilter can skip turning them under. Very small, intricate design elements can be applied quickly and easily. Even so, making this quilt likely took hundreds of hours.

{105 words}

United States

**Quilt top, 1901**

Cotton; pieced and embroidered

Gift of Christopher Monkhouse in honor of Anita and Myron Kunin for their support of acquisitions for the Textile Department 2002.251

In 1901 Buffalo, New York, hosted the Pan-American Exposition, featuring the cutting-edge technology of hydroelectric power, generated by Niagara Falls. The expo is now best remembered as the place where President William McKinley was fatally shot by a political dissident.

This quilt top is composed of squares that were sold at the expo for a penny apiece, with designs on them for quilters to embroider. Several depict the expo buildings. The Electric Tower, a monument to the “age of electricity,” appears near the middle, just below the U.S. flag. President McKinley and his wife also are centrally placed. Such craft souvenirs were designed to entice female fairgoers.

{105 words}

Pennsylvania

**Log Cabin (Barn Raising) quilt, c. 1890**

Wool, silk, cotton; pieced

Gift of Katherine Komanoff Goodman 2003.257.2

Log Cabin quilts are constructed of blocks made up of narrow strips or “logs” of fabric—half of them dark, half light—around a central square. The squares are often red, a reference to the fireplace, the center of the home. The blocks in this quilt are arranged so as to form concentric diamonds that create a bulls-eye effect, a Log Cabin variation called Barn Raising.

Many of the strips in this quilt are woolen fabrics, probably scraps cut from worn-out men’s suits. This suggests the maker was frugal and resourceful. Yet her thriftiness did not overwhelm her aesthetic sense. Even this economical utility quilt is meant to please the eye.

{111 words}

United States

**Floral appliqué quilt**, c. 1860s–70s

Cotton; pieced, appliquéd, and quilted

Gift of Robert and Carolyn Nelson 2004.174.9

Many quilts from the 1700s and early 1800s featured a large central motif, called a medallion. But in the mid-1800s, block-style quilts surged in popularity. This one has nine blocks, each punctuated with a spray of green and red tulips. One advantage of such quilts was that the squares—usually one or two feet wide—were easy to carry along on social visits, allowing women to stitch as they chatted. This meant “free time” was always productive. The quilter could never be accused of ignoring her household duties, even when she was away from home.

A single block with an elaborate appliquéd design and careful quilting stitches could take as long as forty hours to complete. Even an enthusiastic quilter managing a household in the mid-1800s might make only one quilt like this a year.

{135 words}

United States

**Carolina Lily quilt**, c. 1870

Cotton; pieced, appliquéd, and quilted

Gift of Robert and Carolyn Nelson 2004.174.40

Brown flowers? Not common. The blossoms on this quilt probably started out red. Red and green color schemes were all the rage with quilters in the mid and late 1800s. The best-quality red cottons at the time were dyed Turkey red, a plant-based color achieved by a complex dyeing process that originated in Turkey and India. The bright hue would not fade with washing. However, by the 1870s cheaper, synthetic dyes were also in use. Fabrics dyed with synthetic reds were often sold as genuine Turkey red, but the color soon faded to brown or pink.

{97 words}

**Amish quilter**

Pennsylvania

**Diamond in Square quilt**, c. 1910

Wool, cotton; pieced and quilted

Gift of Katherine Komanoff Goodman 2003.257.1

Even a simple quilt design can pack a powerful graphic punch, as this one does with its contrasting color scheme. The Diamond in Square is a longtime favorite of the Amish.

Amish codes of conduct reject all forms of ostentation, pride, and vanity. Amish quilters therefore use patterns that are simple and feature nonrepresentational geometric shapes. They prefer piecing large fabric components and avoid appliquéd. Representational imagery is allowed, however, in the quilting stitches worked subtly across a quilt's surface. Here, the fine quilting stiches—visible only up close—form feather wreaths, eight-pointed stars, roses, and tulips.

{97 words}

[NEEDS DETAIL IMAGERY TBD – CHARLES HAS ALREADY SHOT DETAILS BUT THEY ARE NOT IN MEDIA BIN YET. I WOULD LIKE TO INCLUDE AT LEAST ONE DETAIL WITH A CAPTION. ]

**Amish quilter**

Probably Pennsylvania

**Diamond in Square quilt**, c. 1910–20

Cotton; pieced and quilted

Gift of Richard and Roberta Simmons 91.175.4

With its fine hand quilting and no sign of having been washed, this Diamond in Square quilt was likely meant for display, not use as a bedcover. Though Amish people are devoted to simplicity, their centuries-long quilting tradition has been sustained by their appreciation for quilts as objects of beauty.

The Amish adhere to a strict Christian faith with roots in the Protestant Reformation of the 1500s, in northern Europe. In the 1690s they parted ways with other Protestants as they committed to a life of extreme simplicity. Over time, this led them to forgo modern conveniences like motorized vehicles and farm equipment, indoor plumbing, and electricity. Yet even though the Amish reject modernity and artistic expression (unless balanced by utility, as with a quilt), mainstream cultural critics have praised their bold quilt designs as outstanding works of abstract art.

{139 words}

**Amish quilter**

Pennsylvania

**Sunshine and Shadow quilt**, c. 1920



Cotton, wool, synthetic materials; pieced and quilted

Gift of Katherine Komanoff Goodman 2003.257.3

Traces of wear and tear tell us this quilt functioned as a bedcover. To create it, an Amish woman gathered and stitched together a variety of fabric pieces—cottons, satins, fine dress woolens, and even synthetics. Strict codes governed Amish everyday life in the 1800s and early 1900s such that Amish women used mainly homespun fabrics in somber colors produced by natural dyes. Though they adopted the sewing machine when it was invented in the mid-1800s, they continue to use only treadle models, powered by foot. That the maker of this quilt incorporated purchased fabrics dyed with synthetic colors reflects the changing times in which she lived.

{107 words}

### **Amish quilter**

Probably Pennsylvania

**Sunshine and Shadow quilt**, c. 1945

Cotton, synthetic fabric; pieced and quilted

Gift of Richard L. Simmons in memory of Roberta Grodberg Simmons 94.106.1

Sunshine and Shadow. Trip Around the World. Grandmother's Dream. This traditional Amish pattern goes by many evocative names. This version of the classic design features bright, saturated colors. Though Amish people lived in fairly isolated communities, their striking quilts eventually grabbed the attention of cultural outsiders, and in the 1940s a tourist market for Amish quilts started to take shape. In quilts made for sale the color combinations tend to be more vibrant and the hand-stitching less fine than in those intended for home use.

{85 words}