

Michigan *Time Traveler*

An educational supplement produced by Lansing Newspapers In Education, Inc. and the Michigan Historical Center

Kids' History

Michigan Quilts

Quilts have kept people warm for centuries. This month's Time Traveler takes you back to a time when quilting was a necessity, not a hobby as it is today.

Quilt Making

Quilts for Warmth: In the past, women made quilts to keep people warm. They made quilts when not busy with other household chores or making clothes for their families. They used scraps of materials and pieces of clothes and blankets that were worn out, but still had some good fabric left.

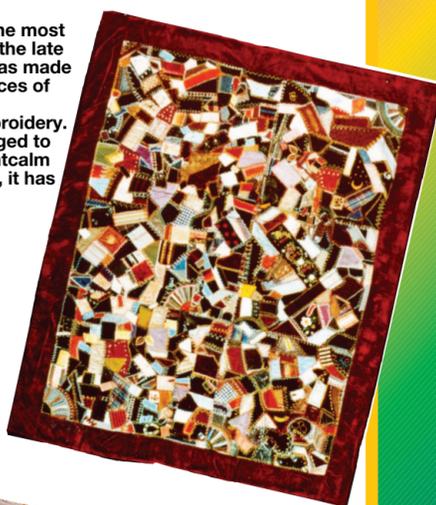
Commemoration Quilts: Women also took pride in making quilts for special occasions. They made bridal quilts for a daughter's wedding chest and keepsake quilts from bits of clothing belonging to family members or friends.

Members of a congregation often made album quilts as a gift to the minister's wife, with the names of the congregation embroidered or written on the quilt.

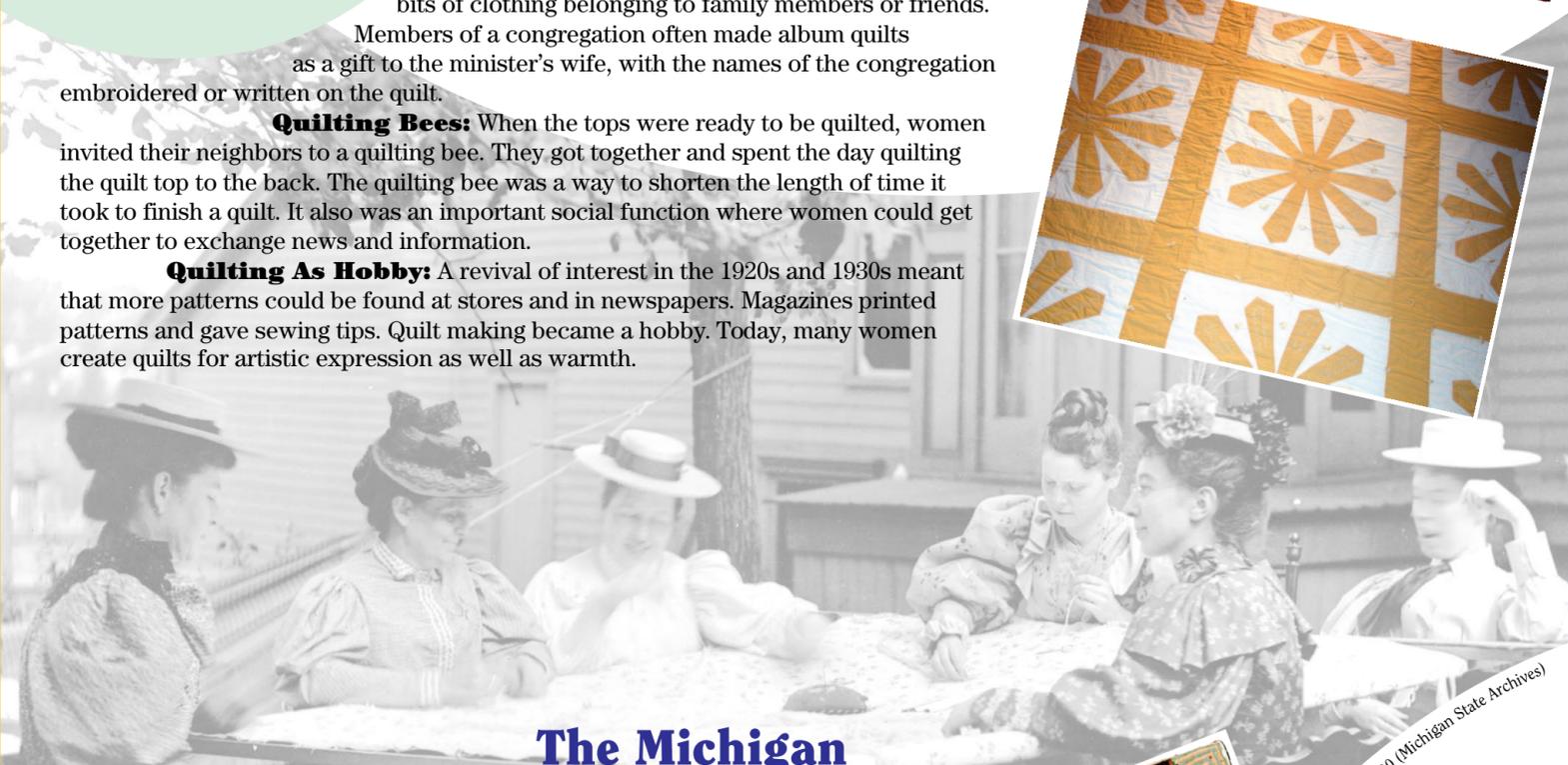
Quilting Bees: When the tops were ready to be quilted, women invited their neighbors to a quilting bee. They got together and spent the day quilting the quilt top to the back. The quilting bee was a way to shorten the length of time it took to finish a quilt. It also was an important social function where women could get together to exchange news and information.

Quilting As Hobby: A revival of interest in the 1920s and 1930s meant that more patterns could be found at stores and in newspapers. Magazines printed patterns and gave sewing tips. Quilt making became a hobby. Today, many women create quilts for artistic expression as well as warmth.

Top Right:
A crazy quilt, one of the most popular styles during the late nineteenth century, was made of randomly sewn pieces of fabric and heavily ornamented with embroidery. This crazy quilt belonged to the Link family in Montcalm County. Made in 1886, it has a red velvet border embroidered with "Jesse Link-1886."
(Photo by Peter Glendinning)



Below:
The Albion, Michigan, chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union made this autograph quilt in 1926. The women embroidered the names of 155 members on the quilt.



Quilting Party c1890 (Michigan State Archives)

The Michigan Historical Museum Quilt Collection

Immigrants and migrants brought many quilts and quilt patterns to Michigan in the 19th century. You often see old quilts in museums. They are popular because of their beauty and workmanship.

The Michigan Historical Museum has approximately 250 quilts in its collection, most of them dating between 1875-1935. The quilts are stored on acid free tubes and are covered by a protective material.

Olivia Rich Hall made the oldest quilt (1815-1830) the museum owns. She brought it when her family migrated to Michigan from New York through the Erie Canal.

The museum's largest group of quilts came from the Upper Peninsula. They were made by women in the Elliott family of Sack Bay.

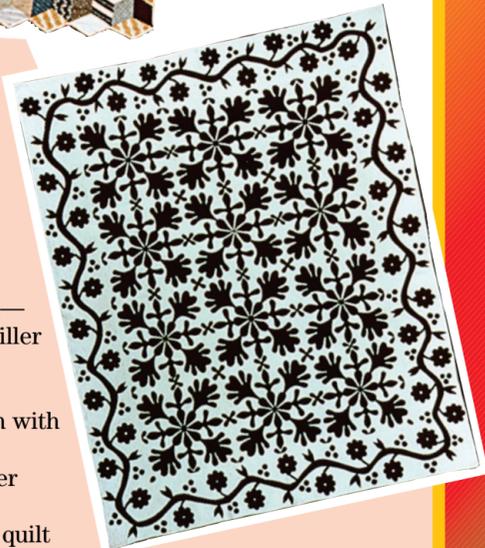


Top Left:
A Log Cabin quilt consists of a series of blocks sewn in a concentric pattern. Each block is made with individual strips of fabric. This Log Cabin-Barn Raising quilt sewn between 1900 and 1910 is a series of concentric squares "rising" to a center square or "chimney block."



Center Left:
This Tumbling Blocks quilt (72" x 63")—mosaic style—was hand-sewn between 1880 and 1900. It is in the Growing Up in Michigan gallery.

Below:
Mrs. Hannah Crow Harden of Allen, Michigan appliquéd this Oak Leaf quilt (80" x 100") by hand before 1862.
(Photos by Peter Glendinning)



Students learn about quilt designs and the art of quilting during Statehood Day at the Michigan Historical Museum.

Things To Do

- Find an item in your home that was given to you or made by someone. Do you know the history of the item? Interview family members and write down the history of the item and why it is important to your family.
- Try your hand at sewing! Find someone to teach you how to do some type of needlework like cross-stitching, embroidery, or quilting and see what you can create.
- Visit our on-line exhibit "Thanks For The Memories" at www.michiganhistory.org and look at artifacts from the Michigan Historical Museum collection, including the quilt made by Olivia Rich Hall.

At the Michigan Historical Museum

Look for the quilts in the Growing Up in Michigan gallery and the 1920s street scene. The Michigan Historical Museum is located two blocks west of the Capitol in downtown Lansing. Museum admission is free. Hours: Monday-Friday: 9 a.m.-4:30 a.m.; Saturday: 10 a.m.-4:00 p.m.; Sunday: 1-5 p.m. Telephone hotline: (517) 373-3559. Visit the Michigan Historical Museum's Web site: <http://www.michiganhistory.org>



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Vocabulary: Quilts, Quilting and Quilters

- A quilt is a cover for a bed that has two layers of cloth—the quilt top and the backing—with padding, batting or filler material in between. The layers are secured by quilting stitches or yarn or thread that ties them together.
- An appliquéd quilt is made from a whole piece of cloth with the quilt design sewn onto the top.
- A pieced quilt is made by sewing together many smaller pieces of fabrics.
- Quilting is a series of small stitches used to fasten the quilt layers together. Today people quilt by hand and by machine.
- Quilters use a combination of several types of needlework and many different patterns to make a quilt. The same pattern can have many names depending on where people live. Pattern names can take their inspiration from nature—Starburst, Sunbeam, Maple Leaf; occupations—Saw Tooth, Carpenter's Wheel; politics—Lincoln's Platform; or the Bible—Jacob's Ladder, Job's Tears.