

african american quilting history

African American Quilting History: A Rich Tapestry of Resilience and Creativity

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Publisher: The National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) Press – a leading publisher specializing in scholarship related to African American history and culture, known for its rigorous editorial standards and commitment to accurate historical representation.

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Summary: This guide explores the profound history of African American quilting, tracing its evolution from its roots in West African traditions to its vital role in the struggles for freedom and self-expression. We delve into the diverse styles, techniques, and symbolism embedded within these quilts, while also highlighting the challenges faced in preserving and accurately representing this significant cultural heritage. The guide emphasizes best practices for research and interpretation, and cautions against common pitfalls in understanding this complex history.

Keywords: African American quilting history, African American quilts, quilting history, black quilting traditions, African diaspora textiles, enslaved quilters, narrative quilts, Gee's Bend quilts, quilt making techniques, preserving African American heritage.

1. The West African Roots of African American Quilting:

The story of African American quilting begins long before the transatlantic slave trade. West African traditions of textile arts, including weaving, dyeing, and intricate pattern making, provided a strong foundation for the development of quilting in America. These traditions, though often suppressed and altered under the brutal conditions of slavery, continued to influence the aesthetic sensibilities and techniques of enslaved Africans and their

descendants. Understanding these origins is crucial to appreciating the depth and complexity of African American quilting history. Researching original West African textile techniques can illuminate patterns and motifs found in later quilts. A common pitfall is overlooking this crucial connection, leading to an incomplete understanding of the craft's origins.

1. Quilting During Enslavement: A Legacy of Resilience and Resistance:

For enslaved Africans, quilting was far more than a craft; it was a means of survival, resistance, and cultural preservation. Quilts provided warmth and comfort in harsh conditions, but they also served as covert communication tools, with patterns and colors conveying messages of escape or rebellion. The piecing together of scraps—often from discarded clothing—represented resourcefulness and resilience in the face of oppression. This is where understanding the historical context becomes vital. It's crucial to avoid romanticizing this period and instead acknowledge the brutal realities of slavery while highlighting the agency and ingenuity displayed by enslaved individuals.

1. Post-Emancipation and the Rise of Distinct Styles:

Following emancipation, African American quilters continued to adapt and innovate, developing unique styles that reflected regional variations, personal experiences, and evolving social contexts. The "narrative quilts," for example, often depicted scenes from daily life, religious beliefs, and historical events, becoming powerful visual records of the African American experience. Careful study of these quilts requires attention to detail, including the specific fabrics, stitches, and patterns used, as well as the historical context in which they were created. A common pitfall is the misinterpretation of symbolic elements without sufficient historical context.

1. The Gee's Bend Quilters: A Testament to Artistic Innovation:

The Gee's Bend quilters of Alabama represent a remarkable example of a sustained tradition of African American quilting. Their unique style, characterized by bold, improvisational designs and an intuitive approach to piecing, has garnered international recognition. Studying their work highlights the importance of community, , and the evolution of artistic practices within a specific cultural context. Accurate representation of

their work necessitates sensitivity to their community and avoiding exploitative practices.

1. Modern Interpretations and the Preservation of African American Quilting History:

Today, African American quilting continues to thrive, with artists drawing upon both traditional techniques and modern aesthetics. The preservation of this rich heritage requires diligent efforts in documenting, archiving, and exhibiting quilts, alongside the ongoing support of contemporary quilters. This includes engaging in respectful collaborations with quilters and their communities, providing appropriate compensation for their work and ensuring the accurate representation of their craft. It's crucial to avoid appropriating their designs or stories without proper credit and understanding.

1. Best Practices for Researching African American Quilting History:

Effective research involves consulting a variety of primary and secondary sources, including museum collections, family archives, oral histories, and scholarly publications. Ethnographic research methods, particularly when interacting with quilter communities, are crucial for understanding the cultural significance of these quilts. A critical approach, grounded in historical accuracy and respectful representation, is paramount.

1. Common Pitfalls to Avoid in Studying African American Quilting History:

Common pitfalls include: oversimplifying the diversity of styles and techniques; ignoring the historical context of slavery and oppression; romanticizing the struggles of quilters; appropriating designs and stories without proper credit; and a lack of sensitivity to the cultural significance of these works. Avoiding these pitfalls requires a thorough understanding of African American history and a commitment to ethical research practices.

1. The Importance of Oral Histories and Community Engagement:

Oral histories play a vital role in documenting the stories and techniques passed down through generations of African American quilters. Active engagement with quilter communities, through respectful interviews and collaborations, is essential for ensuring that their voices and perspectives are central to the narrative of African American quilting history. This also allows for the accurate capture of techniques and the transmission of knowledge.

1. The Future of African American Quilting and its Continued Significance:

African American quilting history continues to evolve and inspire. It remains a powerful symbol of resilience, creativity, and cultural pride, serving as a testament to the enduring strength and artistry of the African American community. Preserving and celebrating this rich legacy requires ongoing efforts in research, documentation, education, and community engagement. The future of this art form depends on collaborative approaches that respect its historical depth and empower the voices of present-day quilters.

Conclusion:

The history of African American quilting is a vibrant testament to resilience, innovation, and the enduring power of cultural expression. By understanding its origins, evolution, and challenges, we can better appreciate the profound significance of these quilts as both artistic creations and historical documents. Through careful research, respectful engagement, and ethical representation, we can ensure that this rich heritage is preserved and celebrated for generations to come.

FAQs:

1. What makes African American quilting unique? African American quilting often incorporates unique designs, color palettes, and stitching techniques reflecting both West African traditions and the lived experiences of African Americans.

1. What is the significance of narrative quilts? Narrative quilts tell stories—visual narratives of personal lives, community events, and historical moments—often conveying experiences not recorded elsewhere.

1. How can I support African American quilters? Support contemporary quilters by purchasing their work, attending their exhibitions, and learning about their art.
1. Where can I find museums showcasing African American quilts? The NMAAHC in Washington, D.C., is a significant resource, along with many smaller museums and galleries across the US.
1. What role did quilting play in the Underground Railroad? While there's debate, some believe quilt patterns were used to signal safe houses along escape routes.
1. How has the style of African American quilting changed over time? Styles have evolved, reflecting shifts in available materials, technology, and social contexts.
1. What are some key challenges in preserving African American quilt collections? Challenges include funding, proper storage, and documenting the stories and techniques associated with the quilts.
1. How can I learn more about the Gee's Bend quilters? Numerous books, documentaries, and museum exhibits detail their unique style and story.
1. Are there any contemporary African American quilters I should know about? Research online and in relevant publications to find many talented contemporary artists continuing the tradition.

Related Articles:

1. "The Legacy of Enslaved Quilters: Resistance and Resilience through

Textile Arts": Examines the role of quilting as a form of resistance and cultural preservation during the period of enslavement.

1. "Beyond the Patchwork: Symbolism and Storytelling in African American Quilts": Focuses on the hidden meanings and narratives embedded within quilt patterns.
1. "The Gee's Bend Phenomenon: A Study in Artistic Innovation and Community Preservation": A deep dive into the unique aesthetic and cultural significance of Gee's Bend quilting.
1. "Tracing the Threads: Connecting West African Textile Traditions to African American Quilting": Explores the historical links between West African textile practices and the development of quilting in America.
1. "African American Quilting in the Post-Civil Rights Era: Adaptation and Innovation": Discusses how quilting has adapted and evolved in response to contemporary social and cultural changes.
1. "Preserving Our Heritage: The Challenges and Strategies of Archiving African American Quilts": Addresses issues of conservation, documentation, and preservation.
1. "Oral Histories of African American Quilters: Capturing Voices, Preserving Traditions": Highlights the critical importance of oral histories in understanding the craft's transmission.
1. "The Material Culture of African American Life: Quilts as Social Documents": Analyzes quilts as primary sources for understanding the social and cultural history of African American communities.

1. "Contemporary African American Quilters: A Celebration of Artistic Creativity and Cultural Heritage": Showcases the work of modern artists continuing and expanding upon traditional styles.

african american quilting history: *Always There* Cuesta Benberry, 1992 Thoughtfully written by curator Cuesta Benberry as catalogue for The Kentucky Quilt Project's installation of 1992 exhibition by the same title. Features 35 quilts in full color. Forewords by Jonathan Holstein & Shelly Zegart. Text discusses the historical context of African-American quiltmaking in the mainstream of American quilting and reviews some of the current artists' use of quilts as their point of reference.

african american quilting history: *African American Quiltmaking in Michigan* Marsha MacDowell, 1997 A valuable, historical contribution, this is the first book on the quiltmaking tradition of African Americans in Michigan. With 60 photographs of quilts, it brings together many images in the exploration of African American quilting and examines quiltmaking as a form women have used to make a contribution to the historic meaning of the African American family and community.

african american quilting history: *Black Threads* Kyra E. Hicks, 2016-03-02 One million African Americans spend approximately \$118 million annually on quilting. Some believe that recent studies of oral histories telling of the role quilting played in the Underground Railroad have inspired African Americans to take up their fabric and needles, but whatever the reason, quilters like Faith Ringgold, Clementine Hunter, Winnie McQueen, and many others are keeping the African American traditions of quilting alive. This is the first comprehensive guide to African American quilt history and contemporary practices. It offers more than 1,700 bibliographic references, many of them annotated, covering exhibit catalogs, books, newspapers, magazines, dissertations, films, novels, poetry, speeches, works of art, advertisements, patterns, greeting cards, auction results, ephemeral items, and online resources on African American quilting. The book also includes primary research done by the author on the Internet usage of African American quilters, a listing of over 100 museums with African American-made quilts in their permanent collections, a directory of African American quilting groups in 29 states, and a detailed timeline that covers 200 years of African American quilting and needle arts events.

african american quilting history: *African American Quilting* Sule Greg C. Wilson, 1999-01-01 Explains the symbolism, stories, and family meaning that make American quilting a rich art form; includes the how-to of quilting; and touches on other crafts of the African-American tradition, offering readers a chance to cultivate their own artistic talents.

african american quilting history: *Stitched from the Soul* Gladys-Marie Fry, 2002 This richly illustrated book offers a glimpse into the lives and creativity of African American quilters during the era of slavery. Originally published in 1989, *Stitched from the Soul* was the first book to examine the history of quilting in the enslaved community and to place slave-made quilts into historical and cultural context. It remains a beautiful and moving tribute to an African American tradition. Undertaking a national search to locate slave-crafted textiles, Gladys-Marie Fry uncovered a treasure trove of pieces. The 123 color and black and white photographs featured here highlight many of the finest and most interesting examples of the quilts, woven coverlets, counterpanes, rag rugs, and crocheted artifacts attributed to slave women and men. In a new preface, Fry reflects on the inspiration behind her original research--the desire to learn more about her enslaved great-great-grandmother, a skilled seamstress--and on the deep and often emotional chords the book has struck among readers bonded by an interest in African American artistry.

african american quilting history: *An American Quilt* Rachel May, 2018-05-01 Rachel May's

rich new book explores the far reach of slavery, from New England to the Caribbean, the role it played in the growth of mercantile America, and the bonds between the agrarian south and the industrial north in the antebellum era—all through the discovery of a remarkable quilt. While studying objects in a textile collection, May opened a veritable treasure-trove: a carefully folded, unfinished quilt made of 1830s-era fabrics, its backing containing fragile, aged papers with the dates 1798, 1808, and 1813, the words “shuger,” “rum,” “casks,” and “West Indies,” repeated over and over, along with “friendship,” “kindness,” “government,” and “incident.” The quilt top sent her on a journey to piece together the story of Minerva, Eliza, Jane, and Juba—the enslaved women behind the quilt—and their owner, Susan Crouch. May brilliantly stitches together the often-silenced legacy of slavery by revealing the lives of these urban enslaved women and their world. Beautifully written and richly imagined, *An American Quilt* is a luminous historical examination and an appreciation of a craft that provides such a tactile connection to the past.

african american quilting history: *Piece of My Soul: Quilts by Black Arkansans* (c)

Cuesta Benberry, 2000

african american quilting history: *Crafted Lives: Stories and Studies of African American Quilters* Patricia Ann Turner, 2009

african american quilting history: *Black Threads* Kyra E. Hicks, 2003 Comprehensive guide to African American quilt history and contemporary practices--Page 4 of cover.

african american quilting history: *Spirits of the Cloth* Carolyn Mazloomi, 1998 The author presents a collection of 150 contemporary African American quilts and the stories behind both the quilts and the quilters.

african american quilting history: *Stitching Memories* Eva Ungar Grudin, 1990

african american quilting history: *The Freedom Quilting Bee* Nancy Callahan, 2005-04-17

The original book on the renowned Freedom quilters of Gee's Bend In December of 1965, the year of the Selma-to-Montgomery march, a white Episcopal priest driving through a desperately poor, primarily black section of Wilcox County found himself at a great bend of the Alabama River. He noticed a cabin clothesline from which were hanging three magnificent quilts unlike any he had ever seen. They were of strong, bold colors in original, op-art patterns—the same art style then fashionable in New York City and other cultural centers. An idea was born and within weeks took on life, in the form of the Freedom Quilting Bee, a handcraft cooperative of black women artisans who would become acclaimed throughout the nation.

african american quilting history: *Show Way* Jacqueline Woodson, 2005-09-08 Winner of a Newbery Honor! Soonie's great-grandma was just seven years old when she was sold to a big plantation without her ma and pa, and with only some fabric and needles to call her own. She pieced together bright patches with names like North Star and Crossroads, patches with secret meanings made into quilts called Show Ways -- maps for slaves to follow to freedom. When she grew up and had a little girl, she passed on this knowledge. And generations later, Soonie -- who was born free -- taught her own daughter how to sew beautiful quilts to be sold at market and how to read. From slavery to freedom, through segregation, freedom marches and the fight for literacy, the tradition they called Show Way has been passed down by the women in Jacqueline Woodson's family as a way to remember the past and celebrate the possibilities of the future. Beautifully rendered in Hudson Talbott's luminous art, this moving, lyrical account pays tribute to women whose strength and knowledge illuminate their daughters' lives.

african american quilting history: *1.6 Million African American Quilters: Survey, Sites, and a Half-Dozen Art Quilt Blocks* Kyra E. Hicks, 2010-10 A handy, eye-opening booklet about today's Black quiltmakers offering the latest quilt industry figures; most comprehensive resource of websites, blogs, and YouTube videos featuring African American quilters and guilds, including references to textile artists, doll makers, fabric designers, and quilters from the African diaspora; six afro-centrally designed art quilt blocks by Washington, D.C. artist Francine Haskins--P. [4] of cover.

african american quilting history: *Signs & Symbols* Maude Wahlman, 2001 Quilt expert

Wahlman introduces readers to a powerful force in African-American quilts: their African-derived meanings, patterns, and iconography. She explores the religious, ritual, philosophical, and aesthetic beliefs that have been retained by descendants of Africans in the New World and demonstrates how these beliefs are represented in their textiles. 150 illustrations.

african american quilting history: Accidentally on Purpose Eli Leon, 2006 This exuberantly illustrated book celebrates the sophistication, vivacity, and significance of improvisational African-American quilts, both as artistic achievements and as expressions of African-American traditions. The knowledge, attitudes, and values carried across the Atlantic by enslaved Africans appear to have informed a quilting tradition so powerful that, to this day, it preserves its identity in a special province of African-American quilts. Such Afro-traditional quilts are made by people who have no formal art training and who usually do not consider themselves artists; they learned their craft and absorbed its aesthetics by watching and helping their mothers, aunts, and grandmothers who, in turn, learned from previous generations. The resulting--often highly idiosyncratic--quilts call out to be seen as the works of art that they are. The brilliance of this work must be partially credited to a tradition which encourages individual expression and provides a context in which the talents of individual artists can flourish. Improvisation, pervasive in black African art and familiar as a basic element of many African-American musical forms, is a vital force in this tradition. The artists maintain a generous attitude toward the accidental, embracing innovations that originate beyond the conscious domain. They use approximate measurement and flexible patterning, in which the design, conceived of as an invitation to variation, will not repeat, but will materialize in a sequence of visual elaborations. Afro-traditional attitudes and methods are antithetical to the standard American quilting tradition--practiced by both whites and blacks--in which great value is placed on precise measurement and exact pattern replication. Instead they bear a keen likeness to the improvisatory practices of the textile-makers of Kongo and West Africa, regions from which American slaves were taken. These antipathies and affinities suggest an enduring African influence on the Afro-traditional quilt.

african american quilting history: Textural Rhythms Carolyn Mazloomi, 2007-01-01 Jazz, like quilting, is a woven art form. Both genres produce textural harvests spun from the life fibers of masters of the imagination who create for our contemplation. Quilting, as in jazz, evokes a host of complex rhythms and moods. Some quilt artists listen to jazz music while working on their quilts because the one form of artistic inspiration ignites in the other. When the two forms connect, the creative energy explodes exponentially. *Textural Rhythms: Quilting the Jazz Tradition* releases both the individual particles and the synergistic power of this explosion. The 83 quilts pictured include traditional, improvisational, and art quilts from some of the country's best known African American quilters. *Textural Rhythms: Quilting the Jazz Tradition* unites the two most well known, and popular artistic forms in African American culture jazz and quilts. These quilt artists have harnessed in cloth the spirit of jazz, and let us feel, hear, and see jazz music.

african american quilting history: Hidden in Plain View Jacqueline L. Tobin, Raymond G. Dobard, 2011-05-25 The fascinating story of a friendship, a lost tradition, and an incredible discovery, revealing how enslaved men and women made encoded quilts and then used them to navigate their escape on the Underground Railroad. In *Hidden in Plain View*, historian Jacqueline Tobin and scholar Raymond Dobard offer the first proof that certain quilt patterns, including a prominent one called the Charleston Code, were, in fact, essential tools for escape along the Underground Railroad. In 1993, historian Jacqueline Tobin met African American quilter Ozella Williams amid piles of beautiful handmade quilts in the Old Market Building of Charleston, South Carolina. With the admonition to write this down, Williams began to describe how slaves made coded quilts and used them to navigate their escape on the Underground Railroad. But just as quickly as she started, Williams stopped, informing Tobin that she would learn the rest when she was ready. During the three years it took for Williams's narrative to unfold—and as the friendship and trust between the two women grew—Tobin enlisted Raymond Dobard, Ph.D., an art history professor and well-known African American quilter, to help unravel the mystery. Part adventure and

part history, *Hidden in Plain View* traces the origin of the Charleston Code from Africa to the Carolinas, from the low-country island Gullah peoples to free blacks living in the cities of the North, and shows how three people from completely different backgrounds pieced together one amazing American story. With a new afterword. Illustrations and photographs throughout, including a full-color photo insert.

african american quilting history: Martha Ann's Quilt for Queen Victoria Kyra E. Hicks, 2012-10-17 Martha Ann is twelve years old when Papa finally saves enough money to purchase her freedom from slavery. In 1830, the family leaves east Tennessee to begin a new life in Liberia. On market days, Martha Ann watches the British navy patrolling the Liberian coast to stop slave catchers from kidnapping her family and friends and forcing them back into slavery. Martha Ann decides to thank Queen Victoria in person for sending the navy. But first, she must determine how to make the 3,500-mile voyage to England, find a suitable gift for the Queen, and withstand the ridicule of family and friends who learn of her impossible dream. Martha Ann's Quilt for Queen Victoria is the true story of Martha Ann Ricks, an ex-slave who spent fifty years saving spare coins to fulfill her dream of meeting the Queen of England.

african american quilting history: The Quilts of Gee's Bend John Beardsley, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2002 Since the 19th century, the women of Gee's Bend in southern Alabama have created stunning, vibrant quilts. Beautifully illustrated with 110 color illustrations, *The Quilts of Gee's Bend* includes a historical overview of the two hundred years of extraordinary quilt-making in this African-American community, its people, and their art-making tradition. This book is being released in conjunction with a national exhibition tour including The Museum of Fine Art, Houston, and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

african american quilting history: Stitching a Culture Together Carolyn L. Mazloomi, 2013-03 Quilting has been popular in this country since its establishment, but documentation of African American quilting prior to the early 1980s is rare. *Stitching a Culture Together: African American Quilters of Ohio* is an awakening to the unknown and uncelebrated contributions of African American quilters in Ohio. Renowned quilter and quilt historian Carolyn L. Mazloomi examines the spiritual, cultural, and historical connection between African American quilters and their creations. With more than forty color photographs, *Stitching a Culture Together* showcases the remarkable range of quilts found in the African American quilt communities around the state of Ohio.

african american quilting history: The Quilters Hall of Fame The Quilters Hall of Fame, 2014-08 Masterpiece quilts and Master quilters--both are honored in The Quilters Hall of Fame. The book profiles more than forty of the quilting world's most influential people--from early twentieth-century quilt designer Ruby McKim to quilt curator Jonathan Holstein to contemporary art quilter Nancy Crow. Lavishly illustrated with one hundred glorious color photographs of their quilts, plus historical photographs, ads, and pattern booklets, *The Quilters Hall of Fame* is essential for every quilter's bookshelf.

african american quilting history: And Still We Rise Carolyn Mazloomi, 2015 Contemporary quilt artists trace the path of Black history in the United States with 97 original works exploring important events, places, people, and ideas over 400 years. Arranged in chronological order, quilt themes include the first enslaved people brought to the US by Dutch traders in 1619, the brave souls marching for civil rights, the ascendant influence of African American culture on the American cultural landscape, and the election of the first African American president. Other quilts commemorate and celebrate cultural milestones and memories, such as the first African American teacher, the Buffalo Soldiers, the first black man to play Othello on Broadway, Muhammed Ali, and Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The 69 artists who contributed works for this curated collection provide narrative explaining the important stories and histories behind the quilts.

african american quilting history: Stitches and Pulls Patricia McKissack, 2016-10-04 This collection of poems that tell the story of the quilt-making community in Gee's Bend, Alabama, is now available as a Dragonfly paperback. For generations, the women of Gee's Bend have made quilts to

keep a family warm, as a pastime accompanied by sharing and singing, or to memorialize loved ones. Today, the same quilts hang on museum walls as modern masterpieces of color and design. Inspired by these quilts and the women who made them, award-winning author Patricia C. McKissack traveled to Alabama to learn their stories. The lyrical rite-of-passage narrative that is the result of her journey seamlessly weaves together the familial, cultural, spiritual, and historical strands of life in this community.

african american quilting history: Bold Improvisation Scott Heffley, 2007 This coffeetable art book presents more than 50 bold quilts collected by Scott Heffley dating back 122 years. The book shows traditional quilts next to their improvisational cousins, as well as African textiles that demonstrate similarities to this American art.

african american quilting history: How to Make an African Quilt Bonnie Lee Black, 2013-03-21 How do we sew together the hoped-for future and the unfortunate past, the bright as well as the darker patches of our lives? How do we stitch cultural differences, join disparate worlds, to create something both beautiful and useful? Bonnie Lee Black subtly addresses these universal questions through vivid stories of her life-changing experience living and working in the fabled city of Segou, Mali, in West Africa. At the request of a talented group of Malian seamstresses, Black taught them the craft of American patchwork quilting and spearheaded an economic development effort called the Patchwork Project. She has now created a many-layered patchwork quilt of a book that brings that time and place and all its colorful characters to life on the page. Threaded throughout is the fictional narrative of Jeneba, a slave-quilter in the antebellum American South who had been kidnapped from the Kingdom of Segou as a child, as well as the real voices of the Malian women who took part in the Patchwork Project.

african american quilting history: Four Centuries of Quilts Linda Baumgarten, Kimberly Smith Ivey, 2014-10-28 An exquisite and authoritative look at four centuries of quilts and quilting from around the world Quilts are among the most utilitarian of art objects, yet the best among them possess a formal beauty that rivals anything made on canvas. This landmark book, drawn from the world-renowned collection of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, highlights the splendor and craft of quilts with more than 300 superb color images and details. Fascinating essays by two noted scholars trace the evolution of quilting styles and trends as they relate to the social, political, and economic issues of their time. The collection includes quilts made by diverse religious and cultural groups over 400 years and across continents, from the Mediterranean, England, France, America, and Polynesia. The earliest quilts were made in India and the Mediterranean for export to the west and date to the late 16th century. Examples from 18th- to 20th-century America, many made by Amish and African-American quilters, reflect the multicultural nature of American society and include boldly colored and patterned worsteds and brilliant pieced and appliquéd works of art. Grand in scope and handsomely produced, *Four Centuries of Quilts: The Colonial Williamsburg Collection* is sure to be one of the most useful and beloved references on quilts and quilting for years to come.

african american quilting history: The American Quilt Roderick Kiracofe, 2004 The most important, comprehensive, and sumptuously illustrated addition to the literature of quilting since *Quilts in America*.

african american quilting history: Alabama Quilts Mary Elizabeth Johnson Huff, Carole Ann King, 2020-11-03 Winner of the 2022 James F. Sulzby Book Award from the Alabama Historical Association *Alabama Quilts: Wilderness through World War II, 1682–1950* is a look at the quilts of the state from before Alabama was part of the Mississippi Territory through the Second World War—a period of 268 years. The quilts are examined for their cultural context—that is, within the community and time in which they were made, the lives of the makers, and the events for which they were made. Starting as far back as 1682, with a fragment that research indicates could possibly be the oldest quilt in America, the volume covers quilting in Alabama up through 1950. There are seven sections in the book to represent each time period of quilting in Alabama, and each section discusses the particular factors that influenced the appearance of the quilts, such as migration and population

patterns, socioeconomic conditions, political climate, lifestyle paradigms, and historic events. Interwoven in this narrative are the stories of individuals associated with certain quilts, as recorded on quilt documentation forms. The book also includes over 265 beautiful photographs of the quilts and their intricate details. To make this book possible, authors Mary Elizabeth Johnson Huff and Carole Ann King worked with libraries, historic homes, museums, and quilt guilds around the state of Alabama, spending days on formal quilt documentation, while also holding lectures across the state and informal “quilt sharings.” The efforts of the authors involved so many community people—from historians, preservationists, librarians, textile historians, local historians, museum curators, and genealogists to quilt guild members, quilt shop owners, and quilt owners—making Alabama Quilts not only a celebration of the quilting culture within the state but also the many enthusiasts who have played a role in creating and sustaining this important art.

african american quilting history: Underground Railroad Sampler Eleanor Burns, Sue Bouchard, 2003 The Underground Railroad story is one of the most dramatic chapters in America's history. It's a story about how countless slaves made their way out of bondage, risking death for freedom. This book features fifteen traditional quilt blocks believed to have had secret meanings to escaping slaves.

african american quilting history: *Facts & Fabrications: Unraveling the History of Quilts & Slavery* Barbara Brackman, 2010-11-05 “A renowned quilt historian . . . present[s] what she considers to be an accurate assessment of slavery, quilts and the Underground Railroad.” —Time Recall an unforgettable phase of our nation's history with America's leading quilt historian. Barbara Brackman presents the most current research on the role of quilts during the time of slavery, emancipation, and the Underground Railroad. Nine quilt projects combine historic blocks with Barbara's own designs. Did quilts really lead the way to freedom? What role did quilts play? Barbara explores the stories surrounding the Underground Railroad. Read about the people who were there! First-person accounts, newspaper and military records, and surviving quilts all add clues. YOU decide how to interpret the stories and history, fabrication and facts as you learn about this fascinating time in history. Excellent resource for elementary through high school learners—curriculum included! “Quilters interested in African American slavery and quilting will find many historically accurate, teachable moments within these pages. The first-personal accounts by slaves of their quilt making, quilt parties, and stolen quilts make emotional reading. A must-have book for your quilting library!” —Kyra Hicks, author of *Black Threads* “Brackman skillfully assembles accurate historical evidence along with beautiful quilt examples infused with slave-era symbolism.” —Dr. Carolyn Mazloomi, author of *Threads of Faith* “Many of persons featured or quoted are women with a connection to the ‘peculiar institution’: slaves, escaped slaves, freed slaves, plantation owners, abolitionists, and so forth . . . teaches history through quilting and offers fun projects for history-minded quilters . . . the stories offer good starting points for one's own research and the projects are beautiful.” —Beth's Bobbins

african american quilting history: **Gee's Bend** William Arnett, 2006 In 2002, Gee's Bend burst into international prominence through the success of Tinwood's Quilts of Gee's Bend exhibition and book, which revealed an important and previously invisible art tradition from the African American South. Critics and popular audiences alike marveled at these quilts that combined the best of contemporary design with a deeply rooted ethnic heritage and compelling human stories about the women. *Gee's Bend: The Architecture of the Quilt* is a major book and museum exhibition that will premiere at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH), in June 2006 before traveling to seven American museums through 2008. The book's 330 color illustrations and insightful text bring home the exciting experience to readers while displaying all the cultural heritage and craftsmanship that have gone into these remarkable quilts.

african american quilting history: Rosie Lee Tompkins Lawrence Rinder, Horace D. Ballard, Elaine Y. Yau, 2020-02

african american quilting history: **This I Accomplish** Kyra E. Hicks, 2009 The powerful quilts of Harriet Powers (1837-1910), a Georgia slave, continue to capture our imagination. Her

two-known creations, the Bible Quilt and the Pictorial Quilt, have independently survived since stitched more than a century ago. Thousands of visitors to the Smithsonian National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston have stood transfixed viewing her quilts. Until today, no one has told the entire, dramatic story of how her quilts, one initially sold for \$5, were cherished for decades in private homes before emerging as priceless, national treasures. This *I Accomplish: Harriet Powers's Bible Quilts and Other Pieces* brings to light new, exciting facts & many never before published: proof Powers was a literate, award-winning quilter, who stitched at least five quilts and promoted her own artwork; complete exhibition history for both quilts; profiles of the two nineteenth century women who sought to purchase the Bible Quilt; profiles of the three men who once owned the Pictorial Quilt; unveiling of a young artist who embellished the Pictorial Quilt and more! This *I Accomplish* is the most comprehensive resource guide on Powers and includes nearly 200 bibliographic annotative references. This *I Accomplish* is written by Kyra E. Hicks, a quilter whose works have appeared in over forty group exhibitions in places such as the Fenimore Art Museum in Cooperstown, NY and the Renwick Gallery in Washington, D.C. She lives in Arlington, Virginia.

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