



## Face of Fillmore

*By Sherry Shepard*

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Quilting is an art that has been around for centuries. When trying to locate an answer to where and when it began, the earliest quilts are attributed to different people at different times. Surprisingly, there were as many different answers to that question as there were articles about quilting.

The oldest surviving example of a quilted piece is a linen carpet found in a Mongolian cave, dated to between 100 BCE and 200 CE. It is now kept at the Saint Petersburg department of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The stitching together of layers of padding and fabric, may date back as far as 3400 BCE. The word quilt comes from the Latin “culcita” meaning to cushion.

For much of its history, quilting was primarily defined as a practical technique to provide physical protection and insulation. However, decorative elements were often also present, and many quilts are now primarily art pieces.

In the early days of Fillmore, quilting was an obvious necessity for warmth, but it also provided a social event we have all heard of – the quilting bee. These gatherings continue today, in fact, Fillmore’s Quilt Guild is the fastest growing social organization in town. The group had its beginnings over a quarter of a century ago with Dianna Fuller as its first president. Bonnie Davis from Kanosh is presently the leader of the group. A year ago, there was a handful of members who enjoyed quilt making as well as other related projects. That number has blossomed into over 50 members today. Two sessions are held with a daytime group and an evening one. The evening one is made up of some beginners who receive basic instructions to get them started. Instructions for quilting techniques is a major part of their routine.

Georgia Starley, a long-time member, says, “Amazing quilting skills have been developed. Quilting is no longer just sitting around a frame.”

Georgia’s two daughters, Donna and Sandra, appear to be real experts in the field, writing for magazines, hosting zoom meetings and seminars, dating antiques quilts and being major collectors of quilts dating back as far as the mid-1800’s.

Some local quilters have gone so far into this that they have built rooms onto their homes just for quilting or rented apartments to serve as their quilt headquarters.

The Quilt Guild is involved in a large number of activities beyond putting stitches on a quilt once a month. They help with the Arts Festival and Cove Fort Days as well as helping with 4-H groups. They even offer a scholarship at the high school.

Obviously, with the Pandemic, gathering all of these quilters in one place for a quilting bee was against what we are all trying to accomplish with self-distancing, but their close friendships have brought them together in much smaller numbers. Never before has quilting been used as therapy during a Pandemic.

Many heartwarming stories accompany the art of quilting. We are probably all familiar with the history of the Panguitch Quilt Walk. In 1863 the first pioneer came to Panguitch from Parowan with Jen Neilson in charge. They traveled over Bear Valley, which was part of the old Spanish

Trail. Crops were planted but did not produce because of the short growing season that year. The next winter was especially cold and the snow was deep. The settlers needed supplies so a group of seven men trudged back over Bear Valley to get food for the starving settlers. Because of the deep snow they had to abandon their wagon and went on foot, sinking into the deep snow with each step. They knelt on a quilt to offer a prayer of help and realized that they did not sink with the quilt on top of the snow. The men were able to reach Parowan and supplies by walking on the quilts, picking them up and placing them on the snow ahead of them and walking on them again. In this way, help was obtained, and the return trip was made the same way.

I told in a column years ago about a cousin of mine who introduced me to the book Gathered in Time: Utah Quilts and Their Makers, Settlement to 1950 by Kae Covington. There on page 52 is the story of one of Fillmore's early residents as told by her great granddaughter. In 1988 Janine Speakman Rodgers, noticed something unusual about a quilt that was frozen to the windshield of one of the family cars. The night had been a particularly frigid one and the old quilt was being used to help lessen the scraping of the windshield in the early morning hours. Janine had remembered this quilt being in the family for years and used as a camp quilt among other things. It was obviously used more for its warmth than its beauty. But that particular morning, through the torn pink exterior, a piece of red, quilt-like fabric was showing through. Janine asked her mother Iris if she could have the quilt and carried the frozen stiff item into the house to thaw out. As it did, she removed the quilting one stitch at time, revealing what she had suspected. Underneath the outside, was a black, white and red quilt nearly a century old. Janine's father Scott was certain the quilt had been made by his grandmother Minnie Colgrove Ashby. At one time, the quilt, the Shoo Fly pattern, had been a work of art but years of use had taken its toll and it had been repaired many times. Too old and worn to be used elsewhere, Minnie must have decided to use it as batting inside a new quilt. She quilted it inside the pastel nine-patch she pieced and quilted in the 1930's - a Depressive era quilt. Minnie was an avid quilter, belonging to a group of ladies who were known as "The Club". They gathered regularly for quilting bees here in Fillmore.

The more I listened, the more I realized there is more to quilting than this column will hold. To be continued at a later date . . .



Minnie Colgrove Ashby