

# QUILT MAKING IN GARLAND

Quilt making has been a very traditional form of craft and artistry going back to before the beginning of America. To create a quilt, a pattern for the top is chosen, then the lining or back, and finally the batting (middle) were sandwiched together. As Garland was known for its cotton crops, it would be presumed most quilts made here had cotton as the batting. All 3 layers were stitched together. Then, the edges would be bound to complete the quilt. The top could be simple or very complex requiring a high degree of skill. Pieced tops were constructed by cutting the fabric into specific shapes and sewing the pieces together to create the design. Applique quilts were designs cut from fabrics and sewn onto a backing. Some quilts incorporated both techniques.

Aside from utility purposes, quilts were made as artistic endeavors as well. Individuals or a group got together and worked on their projects. The comradery and socializing were a big part of early life in Garland and around the country. Many times multiple generations or siblings would work on a project together. Church groups would gather for their work and ministry, too. Getting together was the way one would receive the local news, socialize, and establish as well as retain relationships.

History and quilting are inextricably intertwined. Women have for centuries reflected the major events of our country through their handiwork. In addition to their stitching, early quilting bees often involved discussions dealing with social change, including such topics as women's suffrage, political events and the temperance movement! Though women of the past could not cast ballots until 1920, they truly voted with their needles by incorporating their "votes" in fabric. Women expressed their views and activism through their creative efforts in quilting, and continue to do so today.

*-Denise Bartosh*



# YO-YO QUILTS



Scrappy example of a full size, handmade yo-yo quilt.

The ruched fabric rosette known as a yo-yo in North America and a Suffolk Puff in the British Isles and elsewhere is a curious little thing. It is one of those novelty techniques that, although closely associated with quilts, does not of itself produce a true quilt. Many yo-yo “quilts” have no batting or backing, and are more like coverlets or throws. Even those that are attached to a backing are usually tied rather than quilted. Nevertheless, quilters love yo-yos.

A yo-yo is produced by forming a fold on the edge of a fabric circle with a running stitch, and then pulling the thread to form a gathered round. It can then be combined with others to produce an “open-weave” quilt top, or used singly as an embellishment for three-dimensional appliqué.

Most commonly associated with the 1930s and '40s, yo-yo quilts of that era frequently mimic hexagon mosaic patterns popular at the time, such as Grandmother’s Flower Garden. Yo-yos were also used to create remarkable pictorial quilts and others used yo-yos in the same way that Pointillist artists used paint: as small dots of color arranged in patterns to create an overall image.

But how did yo-yos get that name in North America, and why were yo-yo quilts so popular during the Depression Era? Of course, they are a good way to use up small bits of fabric, which would have appealed to thrifty quilters who needed to make do with what they had.

Yo-yos also are simple to make and portable—other handy qualities. An interesting theory relating to their name has to do with the round wooden toy with a string wrapped around the center axis called a yo-yo that also enjoyed great popularity during the same time period.

No one really knows who invented the yo-yo, but such toys have been used in the Philippines for centuries. And the term “yo-yo” is a derivative of the Filipino word for “come-come” or “return.” The Spanish-American War (and the resultant Philippine-American War) at the turn of the 20th century prompted a wave of Filipino immigration to California.



Yo-yo quilt sewn to mimic Grandmother’s Flower Garden, a popular quilt pattern of the 1930s and 40s.

In the 1920s, a Filipino immigrant named Pedro Flores started The Yo-Yo Manufacturing Company in that state. Cheap, durable, fun and easy to use, the yo-yo was an immediate sensation. Within a few years, demand for the toy was so great that Flores opened two additional factories, producing 300,000 yo-yos a day. Flores’ sold the business for a Depression-era fortune to entrepreneur Donald Duncan, who trademarked the word Yo-Yo in 1932. The Duncan company has been manufacturing the toys ever since.

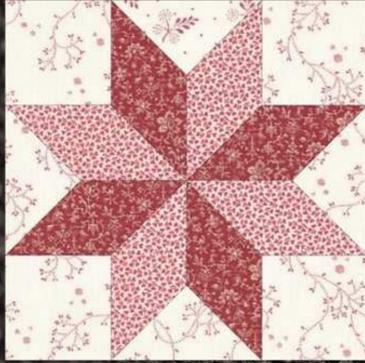
The link between the toy yo-yo and the fabric yo-yo has not been officially confirmed, but their shared round shape and the coincidence of their peak popularity in the United States do make the connection seem plausible. At the very least, there is something inherently playful about a fabric yo-yo. Quilters have as much fun with them as kids playing with toy yo-yos!



# STAR QUILTS



In the quilt on display, and pictured here, the quilter has composed a quilt using a variation of the Starburst block with a six-pointed star center.



The simplest and most popular star pattern is an eight-pointed star, seen above.



A 1930s quilt made in the Texas Star pattern, with beautiful fabrics from the era.

Stars are probably the most common motif used on quilts. Homesteaders traveling West used the stars for guidance; and they looked upon stars as religious symbols of their faith in God. There are hundreds of star patterns. Some quilts have just one large radiating star, often called the Star of Bethlehem or Blazing Star, while in other quilts, dozens of smaller stars are used. However, there are basically 2 categories of stars, each with 2 major subdivisions: those using diamonds, 6 point stars and 8 point stars; and those using only squares and triangles, i.e. Variable stars and Ohio stars. Variable stars are a 4 patch (or 16 patches) pattern and Ohio stars are a nine-patch pattern.

Most star blocks are constructed in the traditional design of an eight-pointed star made of diamond pieces, as is the case with the star quilt on display below. It is patterned with bands of color radiating from the center of the star out to the points.

# BASKET QUILTS

Naturalistic motifs, such as flowers, leaves and vines, have been favorite textile designs for centuries, and American quilts share this tradition. Many of these quilts are appliqued because this method is best suited to the curved shapes of the flowers and vines.

This same theme is possible to create in a pieced quilt. Baskets, with flower designs, were a popular motif among quilt makers from approximately 1850 on, as they could be easily adapted to suit individual tastes, fabrics and color combinations.

The variety of patterns seems almost endless, from baskets with handles to those without, to those with appliqued fruit and flowers added to the pieced basket, to pattern variations including Broken Sugar Bowl, Cake Stand, Flower Pot and May Basket.



In more complex basket quilts, individual flowers are represented with intricate piecing and applique.



In their most primitive form, triangles, diamonds and other shapes are cut from fabric and then pieced to represent flowers.



In the quilt on display and pictured here, the quilter has used piecing to represent tulips and applique for the tulip stems. The basket is pieced from half-square triangles.

A note about quilt patterns:

While we would like to think that every pattern has a name, there are still patterns that have no proper name, and amusingly, many patterns have more than one name. This can be frustrating to a quilt owner who wants a proper name for her quilt. There have been several quilt historians who have endeavored to index the thousands of known quilt patterns and they have done an exceptional job of it. This indexing has also illustrated the fact that many patterns have several known names, and often these names are unrelated. Florence Peto states, in her book *American Quilts and Coverlets*, 1949, "It is not wise to be didactic about the nomenclature of quilt patterns." Barbara Brackman agrees with this statement in her own *Encyclopedia of Pieced Quilt Patterns*, where she states..."it is unwise to be didactic because the facts are very illusive. I now realize that not every pattern has a name, that there is no correct name for any design, and that some of the names we take for granted as authentic nineteenth century folklore actually have relatively short histories."