

Documenting Quilts: Our Responsibility as Quilt Makers

As quilt makers, we have a job and a responsibility to preserve the quilts and remember the quilt makers of the past, present, and future. If we don't take our responsibility seriously, who will?

How many of you have mothers, grandmothers, or other women in your family who made quilts? Do you have any of those quilts? Do you consider them to be valuable? Quilts can have not only monetary and historical value, but sentimental value as well. If you no longer have family quilts, do you know what happened to them? Well, we as quiltmakers know most quilts are made to be used. They get dirty, torn, stained, washed repeatedly, worn out, discarded. Don't you wish that those quilts had been documented? Think about the quilts you have made and those vintage quilts you may own. Think about all the thought, energy, time, money, and the love that you and others like you put into those quilts. Now think about those quilts 50 years from now. What do you think is going to happen to them? Maybe they will be used and worn out. Maybe you or the quilt maker meant them to be used and knew they would be worn out and that's okay. But wouldn't it be nice if there were some kind of record of all that hard work? A label on a quilt is great, a photo and a few words written down would be wonderful, but even better, if your quilt were documented, everyone now and in the future could enjoy your beautiful work.

Please join us in having your quilts documented so they can be enjoyed not just today, but in the future as well. Don't let our women's history be silent and forgotten! We need to tell our stories and show what our work and talent and that of our foremothers is worth!

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Quilt Documentation

What is quilt documentation?

Quilt Documentation is the process of photographing and recording the physical description and all known information about a vintage or new quilt to preserve this information for quilt scholars, enthusiasts, and future generations.

Why document quilts?

Quilts are important historical documents portraying the social and cultural context in which they were made. Quilts are especially important in the area of women's history since so much of this history is unrecorded. When we document quilts, researchers, scholars, and anyone interested in quilts can study them. We can learn more about this fascinating and important part of our history, and much about quilt pattern and design.

Like much of women's handiwork, quilts were made to be used and are also undervalued by the general public. As a result, they become worn and discarded, disappearing forever. Therefore it is very important to document our quilts, not only for ourselves, but to raise public awareness of the value, history, and beauty of quilts.

What is done with the documentation records?

The Quilt Index is a national online repository for documentation records. This record is held by The Alliance of American Quilts at Michigan State University Museum. It is the goal of the Sunshine State Quilt Guild of Florida to have all quilt documentation records from Florida listed on the Quilt Index.

What can I do to help?

Talk to your quilt guild, historical society, local museum, or other service groups about holding a quilt documentation open to the general public. If you know of anyone with quilts, encourage them to have their quilts documented. Volunteer to help with local quilt documentation days. Join the SSQA and help further our goals to document Florida's wonderful quilts.

Important websites:

Sunshine State Quilt Guild www.ssqa.org

The Quilt Index www.quiltindex.org