

I visited the Old Meeting House Museum today and this is what I learned about colonial and present day quilting.



Colonial Quilting

During the colonial period, women sometimes gathered together for “quilting bees” to make special bedcovers called quilts. Quilts are made of two layers of cloth filled with a soft fiber such as cotton, wool or soft feathers called down. The layers are stitched together with many small stitches.

Since cloth was scarce, colonial women used scraps of wool or linen to decorate the top layer of the quilt. The sewing machine had not yet been invented; so all of the quilting was done by hand. The small stitches often added to the beauty of the quilt.

As the art of quilting developed and more materials became available, the quilt designs included buildings, people, geometric shapes, plants and animals.

Some quilt designs showed historical events or special family occasions. The quilts were passed down from one generation to the next as a way to preserve the family history. They were in a sense just like family scrapbooks containing information and pictures of family events like weddings, births, deaths or other important family celebrations.

Quilting is still popular today, but the quilts that are created are most often used as quilt art and hung on the wall. Many women join quilting clubs or attend quilting classes to learn the centuries old craft. Sometimes quilts are created to raise awareness about social causes.

You can find books and magazines showing quilting designs in bookstores, libraries and fabric stores.