

Oral History of Illinois Agriculture



Amish Quilt Activity

Lorene Herschberger is an Amish farm wife who makes and sells quilts. Her audio oral history shows us the characteristics of Amish quilt patterns, colors, and styles. Learn how Amish quilters' color and design preferences have changed since her mother's generation. Research old and new designs, choose one, and make a graph paper design of it with colored pencils using colors the Amish prefer.

The ISM has in its Illinois Amish quilt collection three quilts made by Lorene's mother, Lizzie Ann Miller Bontrager, about 1960. Lorene speaks about how quilting patterns and colors have changed in the Amish community since then.

Amish Quilts

Special points of interest:

- Interviewee quilter
- Amish Quilts Collection Online
- Illinois Quilts Online

See highlights of the Museum's collection of Illinois Amish Quilts online at http://www.museum.state.il.us/ismdepts/art/gallery2/main.php?g2_itemId=16

Quiltmaking allows the sharing of ideas and traditions that link individuals, families, and communities. The history of a quilt can be viewed as threads of association that all too often become broken over time. Amish quiltmakers, with their reverence of

Illinois State Museum



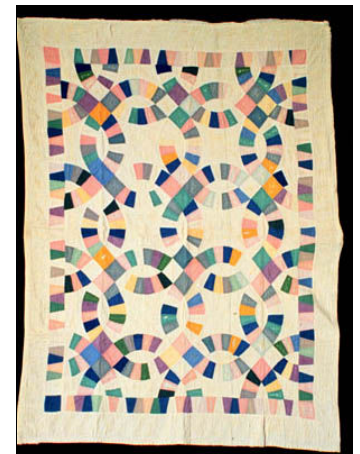
Amish Quilt Design

Quilters can use this resource as a source of design inspiration

Research the designs that Lorene mentioned by searching online. (Earlier designs mentioned were double wedding ring, star of Bethlehem, flower garden, flower basket, broken star, log cabin. Newer designs she mentioned were weaver's fever, lonestar, and X-diamond terra.) Also look into the differences in treatment of the same designs by Amish and non-Amish quilters.



*Weaver's Fever by
Lorene Herschberger,
2008*



*Double Wedding Ring,
1955
Lizzie Ann Miller Bontrager*

tradition, love of family, and faithfulness to beliefs, have created quilts that share common characteristics linked to their culture yet are as unique as the individual quiltmakers.

The Illinois State Museum Amish Quilt Collection contains nineteenth and twentieth-century quilts made by Amish women living in the area of Arthur, Illinois. This online collection features 21 of those quilts, and a short introduction to the Amish.

Illinois Quilts in the ISM Collection

The Decorative Arts Collection at the Illinois State Museum has almost 300 quilts dating from the 1830s to the 1990s. Quilting has always been a popular folk art.

Eighteenth century British immigrants brought quilting to the United States. People who moved into Illinois brought their quilts with them and made more after they arrived. Their descendants made more quilts.

In our collection you may see a quilt similar to one in your family, or simply one that you love to look at. You may find a design you want to make into a quilt of your own. Maybe you will take inspiration from a quilt to create your own designs with geometric shapes.

Here you can also learn about the patterns, the techniques, the symbolism, the fabrics, and the makers of Illinois quilts.

Go to:

<http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/art/htmls/ks.html>

To the *Keeping Us in Stitches* Web exhibit of Illinois Quilts.



Sunshine and Shadow Bricks,
1960
Lizzie Ann Miller Bontrager
ISM Collection

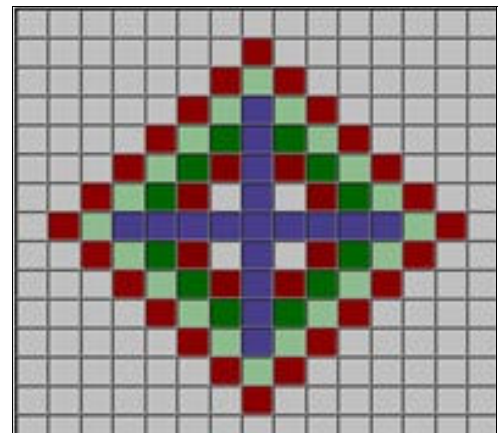
Graphing a Design

Graph the design of your choice: choose one of the earlier or newer designs and choose some Amish-preferred colors of the same time period (using the information from Mrs. Herschberger and other sources.

Use colored pencils and 1/4" graph paper to create your design. Download custom graph paper at:

<http://incompetech.com/graphpaper/weightedgrid/>

Alternative: create it online at one of the grid pattern makers such as:
<http://www.jagwearjewelry.com/jsBeadDesigner.htm>



Sample Grid Quilt Design
in Amish Colors

For Parents and Teachers

Rubric: The graphed design and its label will reflect what was learned by the student.

- 1) the design should look like its title (correctness of pattern)
- 2) the colors should reflect Amish aesthetic for darker

colors in the past, pastels with white or slightly brighter colors or shades of one color today. "Non-Amish" colors such as psychedelics, stripes, or large prints should not appear.

See the National and Illinois Learning Standards for this activity on the next page.

Illinois Learning Standards

ISBE Standards and Goals:

Visual Arts

Middle/Junior High School:

27.B.3 Know and describe how artists and their works shape culture and increase understanding of societies, past and present.

(Using Mrs. Herschberger's comparisons, summarize some changes that have taken place in Amish quilting in Illinois in the 20th century.)

Early High School: 27.B.4b

Understand how the arts change in response to changes

in society.

(Mrs. Herschberger makes and sells her quilts for \$500-600 to earn money for the family. Is this typical of the Amish today? Why did her ancestors make quilts? What has changed in Amish farm life, if anything, to cause this change? (also see Oba Herschberger's interview and his description of the state of Amish farming).)

Social Studies:

Middle/Junior High School:

18.A.3 Explain how language, literature, the arts, architecture and traditions contribute to the development and transmission of culture. *(What similarities are there between the Amish quilt designs in the ISM Illinois Amish Quilts [http://](http://www.museum.state.il.us/ismdepts/art/gallery2/main.php?g2_itemId=16)*

www.museum.state.il.us/ismdepts/art/gallery2/main.php?g2_itemId=16

and Illinois Amish quilts such as Lorene's (shown above) and other new Amish quilts found online?)

Early High School: 18.A.4

Analyze the influence of cultural factors including customs, traditions, language, media, art and architecture in developing pluralistic societies.

(Amish quilters took patterns from American and English quilting and adapted them to suit their aesthetic. Look for similarities and differences between Amish and non-Amish quilts of the same pattern or design.)

National Art Standards

Content Standard 4

For Grades 5-8

Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures Achievement Standard

* Students know and compare the characteristics of artworks in various eras and cultures

* Students describe and place a variety of art objects in

historical and cultural contexts

* Students analyze, describe, and demonstrate how factors of time and place (such as climate, resources, ideas, and technology) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art.

For Grades 9-12

Students analyze relationships of works of art to one another in terms of history, aesthetics, and culture, justifying conclusions made in the analysis and using such conclusions to inform their own art making

Beyond Tradition

Beyond Tradition

Sometimes community quilters adopt and adapt quilt patterns that are popular in the greater community. Lydia Miller Beachy (1863 - 1925) created several Crazy

quilts around 1900. She used scrap pieces of fabric sewn into squares that were sewn together into a grid pattern. She did not use the fancy embroidery stitches that majority culture quilters used to embellish the

surface.

To our eyes today, this quilt looks very modern — like abstract paintings of the first half of the 20th century. Yet the Amish simplicity and use of color is there.





Non-Amish Quilters

Non-Amish Quilters of the past and present used quilt patterns handed down in their families and patterns that appeared in newspapers and magazines. Some of the patterns in print became popular fads at the time of their publication because so many readers would use them to produce similar quilts. Quilt trends among the non-Amish quilters moved faster than in the traditional Amish culture.

*Clara Rush Moore (1867 - 1949) and Susan Rush McCravey (1875 - 1939) Bourbon Township, Douglas County, Illinois
Courthouse Steps Log Cabin Quilt, circa 1910 - 1920.
Silk, chiffon, velvet, 91 by 69 inches
Gift of Miss Modesta Scott, Arcola*

More Activities for Quilters

http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/art/htmls/ks_actres.html

Link will take you to an Illinois State Museum resource page of activities about quilting. They are based on the presentation in the web module of information about and examples from the collection of pieced, appliqué, and whole cloth quilts.

You can learn how quilting techniques are done, how to interview a quilter about his or her work, how to date a quilt from its style and colors, and many more activities.

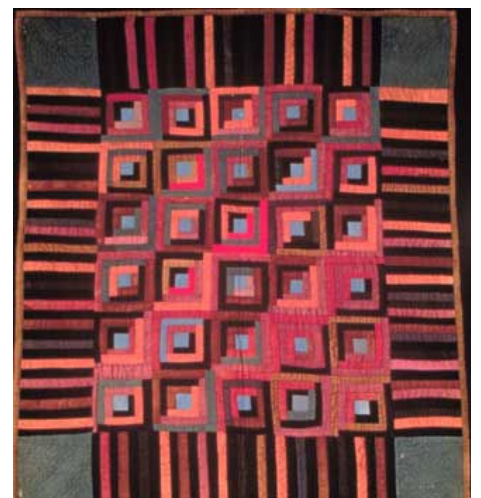
There are two interactive quilt activities, too. One lets you build a medallion-center appliqué quilt design based on motifs

from about 1814.

<http://www.museum.state.il.us/flashapps/clink/applique.swf>

The other lets you create different patterns of log cabin quilts by rotating the blocks.

<http://www.museum.state.il.us/flashapps/clink/logcabin.swf>



*Possibly made by Mrs. Lydia Yoder Diener, Arthur, Illinois
Log Cabin Crib Quilt, 1892
wool and cotton, 41 inches by 45 inches
Illinois Amish Quilt Collection
Illinois State Museum*