GUILDS, BEES, AND CIRCLES: THE ROLE OF CRAFTING GROUPS IN WOMEN'S INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE UNITED STATES

by

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(Under the Direction of Scott Nesbit)

ABSTRACT

This thesis research analyzes how crafting groups, like quilting guilds, contribute to women's intangible cultural heritage in the United States. Sewing and textile crafts have long been a gendered practice since the country's colonization. As a result, the knowledge of crafting has traditionally been passed down through the maternal line in American society. Women have historically gathered together in the form of sewing circles, bees, and guilds to work on their crafts, exchange knowledge, and create a community. Members from two quilting guilds sat for interviews to answer questions about their quilting and sewing background, experience in the guilds, and the guilds' histories. Their answers provided the basis for determining that guilds allow women to transmit their crafting knowledge, further their education, form a community, and keep the practice alive. Therefore, crafting groups are a vital part of American women's intangible cultural heritage.

INDEX WORDS: Quilting, guilds, crafting, intangible cultural heritage, United States

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DEDICATION

To all the women in my life

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Crafting is ubiquitous, and every woman—every person—has had an encounter with some form of crafting. My own experience is not unique. My maternal grandmother was an excellent seamstress, and my mother quilts in addition to other crafts. She first taught my sister and I how to make friendship bracelets. While my sister took up crocheting, I graduated to stringing and weaving beads. Despite being surrounded by piles of fabric growing up, I did not start sewing until I took a design class as an elective my freshman year of high school; however, my mother's encouragement and knowledge and the practicality of the skill meant I kept sewing well past the end of that class.

Figure 1. Denali Quilting Guild, Author's baby quilt, 1995 (Photo taken by Midori Raymore and used with her permission)

When my sister and I were babies, my mom both participated in and presided over the Denali Quilting Guild. When we were born, the women in the group made us both small quilts that we still have today. When we moved, my mom joined the Omaha Quilting Guild. This participation in quilting guilds, among other crafting groups, is part of

Figure 2. Labels on the quilts made for the author and her sister (Photo taken by Midori Raymore and used with her permission)

the larger tendency and pattern of women gathering together to craft. Crafting activities are natural group pursuits, and women have traditionally banded together to craft, which has resulted in historic gatherings in the form of guilds, circles, bees, clubs, and other types of groups. Crafting results in tangible products, such as clothing, quilts, linens, rugs, and much more, but the act of these women joining and participating in these groups is an intangible aspect of women's cultural heritage. There are many reasons for women to band together in order to craft. In terms of survival and quick turnaround, projects such as quilts are much faster to finish with more people. Women also socialize and enjoy each other's company when they gather together for crafting activities. In fact, major social events were based in crafting for example. Additionally, women met to craft and create with charitable intentions for members of their communities and beyond. In the process, they taught each other tips, tricks, and techniques. These groups allowed

them to further their crafting knowledge and pass it onto other women and their children. Furthermore, when these women assembled, they often did so with the purpose of discussing and often fighting injustices whether through discussion and exchanging ideas or the actual products of their combined craft work.[1] For these many reasons, women utilized the medium of crafting to congregate and connect to one another.

Crafting groups reached their height in the nineteenth century. With mechanization, standardization, and cheap products, the presence of crafting groups declined thereafter.[2] In the 1970s, women began participating in crafting groups again due to several social movements, like the back-to-the-land movement. Today, crafting groups are undergoing another revival among women and young people in general. Guilds, bees, and circles must be an enjoyable activity for many American women to have continued throughout much of United States history. Hence, my research question asks how do these crafting groups factor into women's intangible cultural heritage in the United States?

Crafting is often defined as people using their hands to manipulate materials to create a product. Even some manufactured products can be considered crafted because they involved human handwork, and the process is not fully automated. Crafting practices include sewing, knitting, embroidery, crocheting, rug hooking, weaving, beading, pottery, and many more types of craftwork. Crafting groups are any type of organization, formal or informal, that allows people to gather in order to discuss and complete crafting activities. These groups may call themselves a multitude of names and have many

[1] Pat Ferrero, Elain Hedges, and Julie Silber, *Hearts and Hands: The Influence of Women & Quilts on American Society* (San Francisco: The Quilt Digest Press, 1987) 11.
[2] Ferrero, Hedges, and Silber, 19-24.

different organizational structures. Some, such as sewing or knitting circles, conduct themselves more like an informal club that meets regularly and may or may not collect dues. Guilds are another prevalent crafting organization. Fiber arts, textile, or quilt guilds are a formal group that often claim non-profit status with characteristics like bylaws, committees, and mandatory membership dues. Regardless of their structure, these crafting groups represent an assemblage of women with the purpose of crafting for various reasons.

Methodology

I conducted the primary research using qualitative research methods in order to analyze how crafting groups play a role in women's intangible cultural heritage in the United States. To achieve this method, I used case studies of crafting groups. Within the case studies I interviewed women who are active in the group as well as performed participatory observations of group meetings. The results were then analyzed using qualitative methods to see how exactly women's participation in crafting groups is a part of their intangible heritage. The subsequent findings are from a feminist and intangible heritage viewpoint.[3]

In order to understand the pervasive presence of crafting groups, I utilized case studies of two different crafting groups to uncover their history, their practices, and the role these groups have within women's intangible cultural heritage. Crafting groups are ubiquitous throughout the United States; however, the majority of the most well-known groups contain predominantly white members from an observational standpoint. In order to not only be as inclusive as possible but also represent a complete image of the

[3] This research applies to everyone who identifies as a woman or non-binary.

American woman's experience with these groups, my goal was to find groups with racially and ethnically diverse women. The second key requirement for selecting groups for the case studies was my location to the groups. I needed to complete interviews and observation of meetings, but due to time constraints and the nature of these groups' meetings my schedule would not allow for long distance travel. Therefore, I only contacted groups I could easily visit within a day's drive.

In order to find crafting groups, I used common internet search engines to look for a group of women that meet due to a shared interest in a craft such as sewing, quilting, and other textile crafts. This meant the groups needed to have an online presence. I found groups through social media pages, websites, and online lists of crafting groups. A commonality between these groups is that they promote a welcoming environment for anyone who wants to join their group. While most of the crafting groups do not present themselves as a racially or ethnically specific group, their members tend to be predominantly white based on pictures of their members and activities. This representation is not reality. Sewing, quilting, and other crafts are universal. To ensure inclusivity and full representation, I looked for crafting groups that advertised themselves as a specific group of women using the groups' names, mission statements, and/or photos.

The next requirement was to determine if the crafting group was still active. More formal groups such as guilds post meeting minutes, schedules, and latest activities. For groups such as circles it is harder to discover if they still meet. This often required a deep dive through community center schedules and social media posts and events. Once I determined a group was still active, I found a way to contact the group. Through this

process, I was able to find the Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild in Athens, Georgia and the Brown Sugar Stitchers Quilt Guild in Decatur, Georgia.

The research conducted is predominantly based in qualitative methods. The most significant portion of the research are the interviews with women involved in the quilt guilds. My development of the interview questions and process was definitively influenced by qualitative methods.[4] More specifically, the final list of questions was heavily impacted by Michael Patton's categorization and development of qualitative interview questions. After determining the scope of information needed to form the basis of the analysis and interpretation, I formulated preliminary questions. I then expanded on the questions and separated them into categories: background and demographics, experience and behavior, opinion and values, feeling, knowledge, and sensory.[5] The bulk of the questions are related to the participants' experiences and knowledge. I then organized them into the order I would ask the participant. The end result is forty intentional enquiries into a woman's experience with sewing and her involvement in her crafting group organized by background information, personal involvement, group operations, activities, the future of the group, and projects.[6] I conducted interviews both in person and over the phone.

Due to the nature of the questions and the topic, the resulting interviews are quite close to oral histories. Therefore, I consulted books on conducting oral history interviews

[4] Michael Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2015); Jane Ritchie and Jane Lewis, eds., *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers* (London: Sage Publications, 2003); Kathryn Roulston, *Reflective Interviewing: A Guide to Theory and Practice* (London: Sage Publications, 2010).
[5] Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 444-445.
[6] See the appendix for the preset interview questions.

as well.[7] Both qualitative interviewing and interviewing for an oral history depend on listening closely to the interviewee and flexibility of the interviewer. This includes combining the initial interview structure with spontaneous questions in response to answers as well as sensitivity to the role the interviewer plays in the interviewee's life. This meant thoughtfully asking questions to uncover the participant's profound experiences while also following the participant's lead regarding topics and depth. The resulting interviews provide background information for the participant, their personal history with sewing and quilting, their involvement in the crafting group, and as much history and organizational knowledge they knew of the group. Additionally, participants had the opportunity to show me projects and objects they had made in the group if the interview was in person. Consequently, the interviews serve not only as a valuable source of information for research purposes but also as a record of an interviewee's involvement in their organization and its activities that may mean quite a lot to them and the crafting group as well.

I recorded the interviews with the interviewees' permission. Afterwards, I transcribed the interviews by using an online automatic service called Temi to create the initial transcription. I then edited the transcripts for the correct speaker, spellings, and word choices based on the audios. After asking the participants for clarification on spellings and word usages, I gave them the transcripts to edit if they wished and to use for their own purposes. I used the final transcripts with the interviewees' edits for the analysis.

[7] Donald Ritchie, *Doing Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Valerie Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

Additionally, I provided the guilds copies of the transcripts with the permission of the interviewees as well as a copy of the thesis.

Participatory observation is one of the research methods used to determine how women's participation in crafting groups plays a role in their intangible cultural heritage. I attended one meeting for each quilt guild. The Cotton Patch Quilters' meeting was three hours long, and the Brown Sugar Stitchers' meeting lasted for about four hours. Furthermore, I attended several of the Cotton Patch Quilters' charity bee meetings for interviews, and I observed their gatherings for approximately thirty minutes. When I attended the meetings, I observed the activities and how the women interacted with each other, including conversations, relationships, skill sets, etc. Michael Patton's framework for planned observation guided my experience and examination of the crafting groups' meetings. Direct observation of the meetings was necessary to "absorb…language, understand nuances of meaning, appreciate variations in participants' experiences, capture the importance of what happened outside formal activities…and feel the intensity…nothing could have substituted for direct experience."[8] Direct observation of the guild and small group meetings was necessary to fully understand how women experienced the crafting groups as a whole. I wrote field notes of my observations, which informed my analysis. This includes moving beyond the information shared in interviews that only represent a single woman's experience of her crafting group in order to evaluate a complete picture of women's participation in these groups. Thus, direct observation of guild and small group meetings was necessary in uncovering how those activities fit in with women's intangible heritage.

[8] Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 331.

Once the observations, interviews, and transcripts were completed, I prepared to analyze the data according to qualitative narrative analysis. In chapters two and three, I use direct quotations and stories from the interviewees to craft a narrative of their background with sewing and quilting, experience in the guild, and the guild's history and organization using narrative cognition. This type of analysis looks at the interviewees answers as stories and "particular events" in their lives.[9] Each chapter starts with profiles of the guild members with their sewing backgrounds and how they came to be involved in the guilds. The next section examines the history, development, and activities of the guild using the interviews, personal observation, and information from the guilds' websites. The last section gives an overview of each interviewees personal purpose and meaning of the guild to them as well as their hopes and ideas for the future of the guild.

Next, I coded the interview transcripts. Coding involves assigning a topic to the interviewees' answers. The process both reduces and complicates the data by breaking down the answers into simple and general categories. Once coded, the data can then be analyzed for patterns, themes, events, and actions. The data can be reorganized and rethought to look for different and new patterns that might arise. According to Amanda Coffey and Paul Atkinson, coding is "about going beyond the data, thinking creatively with the data, asking the data questions, and generating theories and frameworks."[10] Only once the patterns and themes are found, can I determine findings. This type of analysis is known as paradigmatic cognition, because the findings are based on the patterns that

[9] Kathryn Roulston, *Reflective Interviewing: A Guide to Theory and Practice* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2010) 162-163, 166.
[10] Amanda Coffey and Paul Atkinson, *Making Sense of Qualitative Data: Complementary Research Strategies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996) 30.

resulted from coding.[11] The findings also take into account their effect on the role of crafting groups in women's intangible cultural heritage in the United States. The findings are aligned with intangible cultural heritage theories as well as the feminist perspective. Feminist theory closely correlates with published works on the gendered experience pertaining to craftwork, domestic work, and historic preservation.[12] Feminism is often intertwined with women's participation and actions within crafting groups. Feminist theory provides the academic background for how crafting groups are so closely related to women's lives and agency. There are also books and documents available regarding the nuances and philosophy of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage that influenced the findings.[13] The structure of these theories allows for a thorough examination of the patterns revealed by coding to determine how women's participation within these groups is a part of the American woman's intangible cultural heritage.

Historic Context and Literature Review

Intangible Cultural Heritage

In 1972, the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted the World Heritage Convention in order to protect natural and cultural heritage. Preservation and conservation professionals

[11] Roulston, *Reflective Interviewing*, 163.
[12] Elsa Barkley Brown, "African American Women's Quilting: A Framework for Conceptualizing and Teaching African-American Women's History," *Signs* 14, no. 4 (1989): 921-929; Gail Lee Dubrow and Jennifer B. Goodman, eds. *Restoring Women's History through Historic Preservation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co, 1984).
[13] Alan Jabbour, "Folklife, Intangible Heritage, and the Promise and Perils of Cultural Cooperation." in *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Robert Stipe, 423-450 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Fairchild D. Ruggles and Helaine Silverman, *Intangible Heritage Embodied* (New York: Springer, 2009); Helmut Anheier and Yudhishthir Raj Isar, *Heritage, Memory and Identity* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2011); Lourdes Arizpe and Cristina Chávez, *Anthropological Perspectives on Intangible Cultural Heritage* (New York: Springer, 2013).

around the world had long been grappling with how to address heritage. This document was the first to define and put forth strategies for protecting people's heritage; however, the Convention was not a solution for protecting all of the world's heritage. One of the main issues of the Convention is that it only addressed the fixed physical elements of heritage. The Convention organized elements of natural and cultural heritage into specific categories. Those categories are monuments, groups of buildings, and sites that display aspects of outstanding universal value.[14] The World Heritage Convention document itself never mentions the words tangible or intangible, but UNESCO only addressed physical heritage at the time.

Francesco Francioni's commentary on the 1972 World Heritage Convention explains the document article by article. There are several references to the fully tangible heritage the World Heritage Convention is addressing as well as the lack of acknowledgement to intangible heritage. Guido Carducci breaks down Article 4 of the Convention and explains the process of transferring heritage to future generations. He recognizes that while the Convention actively uses the phrase "heritage" instead of "property" for legal reasons, the nature of transmission is firmly tied to physical properties. Carducci also explains that these forms of heritage are at much less risk than intangible heritage.[15] An instance in the 1972 Convention that indirectly acknowledges intangible heritage is the evaluation of a piece of tangible heritage's universal value

[14] UNESCO, *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, Paris, General Conference of UNESCO, 1972, https://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf (accessed October 7, 2019) 2.
[15] Guido Carducci, "Articles 4-7: National and International Protection of the Cultural and Natural Heritage," in *The 1972 World Heritage Convention: A Commentary*, ed. by Francesco Francioni (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 114-115.

according to its association with practices, events, beliefs, ideas, and living traditions.[16] While UNESCO did not purposely leave intangible heritage out of the 1972 Convention, they placed all their focus on the physical manifestations of cultures and only mentioned intangible heritage only as it was pertinent to the tangible. Over the years governments and organizations had to expand on the Convention to include valuable and disappearing intangible cultural heritage. Since 1972, the General Conference and UNESCO have adapted and further developed the World Heritage Convention to expand its purview, definitions, and relevance to today's world and further actions while still taking into account the spirit of the original Convention.

UNESCO's first attempt at acknowledging the intangible aspects of cultural heritage was a Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore in 1989. This document was not successful, because it was confusing, contradictory, and overall not helpful. The Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore encouraged countries to research, document, and celebrate their folklore and cultural traditions, but it lacked the official and legal obligations by UNESCO to ensure countries comply to their standards of protection.[17] Finally, in 2003 the General Conference signed a document to protect intangible heritage under the Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The document went into force in 2006. Under this document intangible heritage was given an official definition and methods of defending this specific heritage:

> "The 'Intangible Cultural Heritage' means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities,

[16] Guido Carducci, "The 1972 World Heritage Convention in the Framework of Other UNESCO Conventions on Cultural Heritage," in *The 1972 World Heritage Convention: A Commentary*, ed. by Francesco Francioni (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 375.
[17] Richard Kurin, "U.S. Consideration of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention," *Ethnologies* 36, no. 1-2 (2014) 327.

> groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development."[18]

The definition for intangible cultural heritage is vastly different from that given to cultural and natural heritage in the World Heritage Convention. According to the 2003 Convention, intangible heritage displays itself through oral traditions and expressions, including language, traditional craftsmanship, performing arts, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and social practices, rituals, and festive events.[19] Furthermore, Intangible heritage does not have the same criteria as the heritage dealt with in the 1972 Convention.

First, intangible cultural heritage does not need to hold universal value. Rather, its value comes from the community concerned. Additionally, intangible cultural heritage is named so due to the nature of the heritage that is protected. A person cannot physically hold or touch knowledge or practices associated with a particular culture. Instead, intangible heritage lives in the minds of cultural members. Of course, there are very often tangible products that are associated with intangible cultural heritages. Those deserve to be preserved in their own right, but the knowledge, practices, and processes that make up a culture's intangible heritage are ephemeral and easily lost. Consequently, the notion of authenticity that is applied to natural and cultural heritage under the 1972 Convention no

[18] UNESCO, *Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, Paris, General Conference of UNESCO, 2003, https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention (accessed October 7, 2019) 5.
[19] UNESCO, *Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 5.

longer applies.[20] As time progresses, the environment and influences around a group of people impact and may alter their knowledge, processes, and expressions associated with their intangible cultural heritage. The 2003 Convention allows for the evolution of intangible heritage as it is passed from one cultural member to the next. Despite the transformations intangible cultural heritage may or may not go through, the knowledge, practices, and skills remain as a constant cultural identifier for a group of people.

Preserving intangible cultural heritage faces several difficulties. Today, globalization and technology create a complicated environment for expressions of cultural identity. Social anthropologist Henrietta Moore claims that the, "forces of globalisation and modernity are eroding cultural traditions. In fact…cultural diversity is both eroded and recreated by processes of globalisation, and information technologies are playing a significant role in preserving and disseminating cultural heritage and traditions."[21] Moore's view sounds both grim and optimistic of the impact of globalization on intangible heritage. Globalization is contributing to the breakdown of unique, specific cultures into one easily understandable culture. At the same time, globalization and new technologies help preserve and carry on intangible traditions that may have been lost at a different point in time. Indeed, the internet could not only help with the preservation of intangible cultural heritage but also transform and even create intangible traditions. Alice Halsdorfer explains how the internet is the ideal way of documenting and cataloguing intangible heritage. The internet allows almost universal access for comparing cultures, permits cultural members to explain their own intangible

[20] Francesco Francioni, ed., *The 1972 World Heritage Convention: A Commentary*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 42.
[21] Henrietta L. Moore, "Intangibles: Culture, Heritage and Identity," in. *Heritage, Memory and Identity*, ed. by Helmut Anheier and Yudhishthir Raj Isar (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2011) 273.

traditions, and offers many avenues for people to interact with the heritage. In short, while the internet is not a replacement for real-life experiences, it is extremely valuable for preserving intangible cultural heritage. Halsdorfer moves a step further and explains how the internet can be a tool for the formation of new intangible heritages. For example, the internet may result in the creation of virtual heritage in the form of web-based artworks or publications, virtual cultures such as new social networks or identity switching, and hybrids of existing intangible cultural heritages.[22] Therefore, globalization and technology have had a huge impact on preserving and documenting intangible cultural heritage; however, other issues arise with the actual act of preserving intangible culture.

Attempting to protect intangible cultural heritage is extremely complicated. While preservationists, conservationists, other professionals, and compassionate individuals and groups document intangible cultural heritage in order to protect the knowledge and practices, they often make traditions tangible. According to ethnologist Thorolf Lipp, documenting intangible heritage practices through video has created or at least amplified the issue of making the intangible tangible. In attempts to protect and preserve intangible heritage, professionals document and archive aspects of the intangible traditions. They are attempting to "materialize the immaterial." Lipp states, "[m]aterializing immaterial cultural practices creates a situation in which this practice undergoes a fundamental change in its ontological state. Moreover, in the course of medializing intangible heritage, it is not only materialized formally but also turned into a new, virtual appearances whose

[22] Alice Halsdorfer, "Meaning of the Internet for the Intangible Heritage Convention," in *Understanding Heritage: Perspectives in Heritage Studies*, ed. by Marie-Theres Albert, Roland Bernecker, and Britta Rudolff (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2013) 187-188.

effects on people differ dramatically from the original cultural practice carried out by physically existent human beings."[23] He theorizes that documenting the intangible will alter practices within intangible heritages. There is not necessarily a solution to this contradiction. Anthropologist Laura R. Graham also discusses the issues that arise during documentation and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, especially those of indigenous cultures. She suggests more local and community control of the documentation and records of an intangible heritage would give power back to the cultural members.[24] Anthropologists Lourdes Arizpe and Cristina Amescua likewise examine the complicated processes of transmission of intangible cultural heritage, the effect of migration, and working with the cultures involved with a particular heritage.[25] Some intangible heritage traditions would disappear without documentation, but these practices are also part of a life cycle where they may either transform or in fact stop existing.

UNESCO developed the 2003 Convention to address the protection of intangible cultural heritages. The Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage meets every year to inscribe different traditions of their lists. Currently, there are 429 elements of intangible cultural heritage on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. A second list, the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, contains fifty-nine elements of intangible

[23] Thorolf Lipp, "Materializing the Immaterial: On the Paradox of Medializing Intangible Cultural Heritage," in *Understanding Heritage: Perspectives in Heritage Studies*, ed. by Marie-Theres Albert, Roland Bernecker, and Britta Rudolff (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2013) 187-188.
[24] Laura R. Graham, "Problematizing Technologies for Documenting Intangible Culture: Some Positive and Negative Consequences," in *Intangible Heritage Embodied*, ed. by Fairchild D. Ruggles and Helaine Silverman (New York: Springer, 2009) 186-187.
[25] Lourdes Arizpe and Cristina Amescua, eds., *Anthropological Perspectives on Intangible Cultural Heritage* (New York: Springer, 2013).

cultural heritage that may be lost without precautions. Finally, there is a Register of Good Safeguarding Practices, which lists programs across that world that are good examples of how to protect intangible heritage. Intangible cultural heritages face many threats throughout the world. This includes repressive politics, environmental degradation, new products and techniques, loss of language or cultural spaces, economic pressure, over commercialization, and misappropriation to name only a few.[26] UNESCO developed these lists to protect, document, and celebrate the diversity of these intangible knowledges and practices across the world; however, the United States does not have a single entry on any of UNESCO's lists.

Intangible Heritage in the United States

The United States helped form UNESCO in 1945 and played an important role in the passage of the 1972 World Heritage Convention. In 1984, the United States withdrew as a member from UNESCO citing restrictions of the free flow of information and increased state control over people.[27] Nevertheless, after discussions and the passage of the 1989 Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore, UNESCO partnered with the Smithsonian to hold an international conference on the topic in 1999. The proceedings of that carefully organized conference led to the international agreement. UNESCO needed to develop a new document that would not only remedy the flaws of the 1989 Recommendation but also allow for changes in technology and globalization.[28] By 2002, UNESCO had formulated a draft of the Convention. They

[26] UNESCO, "Dive into Intangible Cultural Heritage!: Threats," https://ich.unesco.org/en/dive&display=threat#tabs (accessed October 10, 2019).
[27] Richard Kurin, "U.S. Consideration of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention," Ethnologies 36, no. 2 (2014): 326-327.
[28] Kurin, "U.S. Consideration of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention," 328-331.

invited member and observer states, such as the United States, to comment on the document. An American delegation formed by the U.S. Department of State attended meetings and offered advice for the Convention. That same year, President George W. Bush announced a surprised return to UNESCO as a member, which would be put into effect in 2003. Despite this move, the United States chose to abstain from voting on the Convention. The U.S. government did not make culture high on their foreign policy priorities and did not see the reason for an international treaty regulating intangible culture. Moreover, officials thought the definition for intangible cultural heritage put forth by the Convention too vague. The 2003 Convention was just one of many treaties the United States declined to sign at the time. This does not mean strides have not been taken to address intangible heritage within the United States.[29]

In spite of the United States' stance on international recognition and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, the government has not ignored America's intangible heritage. After several decades of separate organizational and institutional development of folklife recognition, definitions, and programs, congress passed the American Folklife Preservation Act in 1976. This legislation created the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress and strove to preserve cultural traditions in the United States. In 1980, congress passed an amendment to the National Historic Preservation Act that mandated a report for the president and congress with recommendations on preserving, conserving, and encouraging, "the continuation of the diverse traditional prehistoric, historic, ethnic, and folk cultural traditions that underlie and are a living expression of our American heritage." In 1983, the American Folklife Center and the National Park Service

[29] Kurin, "U.S. Consideration of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention," 336-338.

published *Cultural Conservation: The Protection of Cultural Heritage in the United States*.[30]

The report outlined recommendations and measures for local, state, regional, and federal entities to take to protect intangible cultural heritage in the United States. For example, they recommended the implementation of a national system for cultural conservation, which would "protect community life and values by explicitly including folklife and related traditional lifeways in appropriate Federal legislation and administrative guidelines."[31] Furthermore, the government would have states create support agencies and organizations such as folklife offices, historic preservation offices, arts agencies, historical societies, and humanities councils. The government would also support and encourage local programs that would emphasize cultural heritage and identity through documentation, presentation, education, and other approaches. These entities would "increase the application of knowledge about community life and values to decision-making in environmental planning and design of impact mitigation projects."[32] Finally, the United States would have a national survey, documentation, and archiving program of "folklife and related traditional lifeways" under a memorandum agreement between the National Park Service and the American Folklife Center.[33] *Cultural Conservation* outlined the major ways the United States could preserve American intangible cultural heritage.

[30] Alan Jabbour, "Folklife, Intangible Heritage, and the Promise and Perils of Cultural Cooperation," in *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Robert Stipe (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003) 433-435.
[31] Ormond H. Loomis, *Cultural Conservation: The Protection of Cultural Heritage in the United States, American Folklife Center and National Park Service* (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 1983) 71.
[32] Loomis, 71.
[33] Loomis, 71-78.

Afterwards, the National Park Service, the American Folklife Center, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Smithsonian, and other organizations developed initiatives and programs to deal with the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. Both Alan Jabbour as former director of the American Folklife Center and Richard Kurin as former director of the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage have published works about American efforts to conserve its own intangible heritage.[34] Additionally, UNESCO provides a list of non-governmental organizations within the United States that address intangible heritage. Aside from the aforementioned organizations, there is the U.S. chapter of the International Organization of Folk Arts and the Center for Traditional Music and Dance.[35] Even though the United States has shown indifference towards entering the international effort to recognize intangible cultural heritage, the government and other organizations have tools to identify and preserve domestic intangible heritage.

Crafting in all its forms firmly fits the definition of intangible cultural heritage as both knowledge and practices and rituals. UNESCO has included many examples of traditional crafting practices. In these instances, intangible heritage is important not for the physical craft piece that people produce but rather for the members of a certain culture that hold the knowledge of how to perform the craft and pass the practices onto future generations. The traditional art of Azerbaijani carpet weaving in Azerbaijan,

[34] Alan Jabbour, "Folklife, Intangible Heritage, and the Promise and Perils of Cultural Cooperation," in *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Robert Stipe, 423-450 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Richard Kurin, "Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in the 2003 UNESCO Convention: A Critical Appraisal," *Museum International* 56, no. 1-2 (2004): 66-77; Richard Kurin, "U.S. Consideration of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention," *Ethnologies* 36, no. 1-2 (2014): 325-358.

[35] UNESCO, "United States of America and the 2003 Convention," https://ich.unesco.org/en-state/united-states-of-america-US (accessed October 11, 2019).

bobbin lacemaking in Slovenia, weaving of Mosi in the Hasan region of Korea, Chakan embroidery in Tajikistan, Matyó folk art embroidery in Hungary, and Lefkara lace in Cyprus are some examples of traditional craft practices and knowledge inscribed on UNESCO's intangible heritage lists. Furthermore, UNESCO mentions how each of these intangible cultural heritages are continued by people—mostly women—either sharing their knowledge of the craft with family members, participating within informal groups or formal associations, or apprenticeships. In these examples, the craft itself is a unique traditional practice and the resulting crafting groups are secondary but no less important. There is at least one instance where the practice of grouping for a common goal is the intangible heritage. In Germany, the idea and practice of organizing shared interests into cooperatives is considered an intangible element of German cultural heritage. While not directly related to crafting, this is a representation of how groups with shared interests and practices are considered an intangible cultural heritage.[36] The organizations in the United States do not catalog intangible cultural heritage the same way as UNESCO, but they still recognize crafting and its associated practices and knowledge. Therefore, there is a definite precedent for the inclusion of crafting groups as intangible cultural heritage.

Gender and Intangible Cultural Heritage

While both UNESCO and the United States have made strides towards legitimizing and protecting intangible cultural heritage, women are not separately acknowledged as holding essential roles in intangible practices and knowledge. UNESCO had to write additional documents addressing women within intangible heritage. There were multiple conferences held by the United Nations to discuss problems women faced

[36] UNESCO, "Dive into Intangible Cultural Heritage!: Domains of the Convention," https://ich.unesco.org/en/dive&display=domain#tabs (accessed October 11, 2019).

across the world. This included the 1975 World Conference of the International Women's year in Mexico City, the 1980 World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women in Copenhagen, the 1985 World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the UN Decade for Women in Nairobi, and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.[37] While UNESCO attempted to address intangible heritage in 1989 and continued to hold discussions, it was not until 2001 that a group within the organization finally discussed women's roles in intangible cultural heritage.

The Iran National Commission for UNESCO was the first to release a report in 2001 entitled *Activities in the Domain of Women and Intangible Heritage*. Iran wrote and released this report while UNESCO drafted the 2003 Convention. The report is not limited to Iranian women but rather all women involved in intangible cultural heritage around the world. The Iran National Commission stated that women's "roles in relation to intangible heritage are of particular significance, and encompass what may be described as fundamental domains and expressions of cultural heritage, which are very often central to maintaining cultural identity," and furthermore, "women play the principal role in raising children, through which the intergenerational transmission and renewal of many forms of intangible heritage occurs. In maintaining and passing on intangible culture to future generations, women also recreate and transform culture."[38] Women play many essential roles within intangible cultural heritage including not only participating in the intangible practices and knowledge but also protecting and continuing their heritage as well as adapting to new materials and technologies.

[37] UN Women, "World Conferences on Women," https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/world-conferences-on-women#copenhagen (accessed October 12, 2019).
[38] UNESCO, *Activities in the Domain of Women and Intangible Heritage*, Iran National Commission for UNESCO (Tehran, Iran: Iran National Commission for UNESCO, 2001) 2, 9.

The report acknowledges the threats and issues related to women and their role within intangible heritage around the world. They call for "immediate attention in activities to support women's intangible heritage," which includes addressing, "the lack of systematic research undertaken in this field to date, and the inadequate recognition of the importance of women's roles and contributions, both within local communities and wider contexts."[39] According to the report, women are not included in intangible heritage research. Moreover, they are not recognized for their cultural contributions by local communities, organizations, and governments. Furthermore, laws around the world regulate women's access to property, education, employment, civil rights, and social welfare. The report claims that the confinement of women to the domestic sphere helps them become the main stakeholders of intangible heritage. At the same time, their roles are constantly undermined and degraded by the very fact that women are associated and engaged with "traditional" work.[40] Therefore, recognition of women's work and roles within their community's intangible heritage is necessary and prudent.

Shortly after the 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was signed in October, UNESCO held a meeting and published a report on Gender and Intangible Heritage in December of 2003. In this meeting, UNESCO recognized that women were purposely left out of the 2003 Convention in order to not give special attention towards women. Instead, UNESCO would consider women as a community. UNESCO also recognized the need for separate discussions of women's roles within intangible cultural heritage. In the meeting, UNESCO acknowledged that gender is very often a nuanced issue with any intangible heritage. In a heritage in which

[39] UNESCO, *Activities in the Domain of Women and Intangible Heritage*, 2.
[40] UNESCO, *Activities in the Domain of Women and Intangible Heritage*, 2-3.

multiple genders are involved, women still may be relegated to very different roles and divisions of work than men. UNESCO identified four main perspectives of women and issues regarding gender within intangible cultural heritage: insider and outsider, tradition and modernization, transmission and safeguarding, and gender inequality and equality.[41] During the meeting, UNESCO addressed how gender is a constant underlying issue within each of the topics. For instance, the act of safeguarding intangible heritage may have side effects on women. Documenting and protecting an intangible cultural heritage makes an often private practice public. In the process, women could either be confined to their old position or be empowered by the recognition of their intangible heritage.[42] UNESCO published this report in order to help governments and organizations realize and understand the special and nuanced position women have within intangible cultural heritage. Both UNESCO and the Iran National Commission were right to address the role of gender in intangible heritages. These knowledges and practices often take place and are passed down within the domestic sphere, and women traditionally have been restricted to and subsequently have control over the home.

Women and Crafting

Crafting was inherent to survival and everyday life. As such a broad term, crafting includes everything from making thread to weaving cloth to knitting and sewing. In the United States, crafting has long been the domain of women. Throughout history men have actively participated and even dominated industries such as weaving, but in early America those activities were quickly feminized. Weaving and other textile crafts became

[41] UNESCO, *Final Report: Expert Meeting 'Gender and Intangible Heritage.'* (Paris: Intangible Heritage Section, UNESCO, 2003) 1-6.
[42] UNESCO, *Final Report: Expert Meeting 'Gender and Intangible Heritage,'* 9.

a part of women's main duties. These pursuits were necessary for survival because eighteenth and nineteenth century America was extremely rural and mostly unindustrialized during that time period. Even when much of the weaving was industrialized, women still had to keep sewing and knitting in the home for their everyday necessities. In the process, they taught their children, mostly the girls, to sew and knit.[43] From the beginning in the United States, crafting was an extremely gendered activity. While under English rule, men dominated the weaving industry because they set up the guilds, but with the boycotting of English goods, spinning and weaving became a part of women's duties in the home once again.[44] Thereafter, crafting remained as one of women's many responsibilities in the domestic sphere.

Nancy Cott has multiple publications discussing women's history and the relation to crafting. Cott has edited a twenty-volume set about all of women's history in the United States with numerous mentions of domesticity as related to women as well as their actions in relation to the domestic sphere and domestic work. Similarly, Cott speaks to the different spheres New England women inhabited. This included how they were able to work, the amount and type of education they were able to receive, and their roles within the domestic sphere, religion, and the sisterhood. Cott discusses how women's place in society helped develop the cult of domesticity in the early nineteenth century.[45] Admittedly, Cott is mostly discussing white, middle-class women, however, her work is an example of some of the expectations placed on women.

[43] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2001) 4-16.
[44] Ulrich, 37.
[45] Nancy F. Cott, *History of Women in the United States: Historical Articles on Women's Lives and Activities* (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1992-1994); Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

The cult of domesticity developed in the nineteenth century in response to industrialization. With much of their domestic work taken out of the home, women in mostly urban areas were relying more and more on men's income. Pat Ferrero, Elain Hedges, and Julie Silber give an excellent overview of how women sewed in the nineteenth century. This includes how the cult of domesticity tied women's place, value, and lives to crafting. If girls went to school, sewing was almost always part of the curriculum in order to train them for their future domestic lives. Women were confined to the private and domestic spheres, because they were seen as the moral spine of the family. Women had to perfect sewing, because their sewing abilities, "came to represent such an array of both essential and desirable skills, habits, attitudes and virtues as to become the quintessential 'feminine' activity, the one through which a woman most closely identified herself with her 'sphere.'"[46] A woman's worth was directly tied to her expertise in sewing and other needlework crafts, and they passed this down to their daughters by training them and giving gifts specifically related to sewing. Miriam Forman-Brunell and Leslie Paris' edited collection discusses what it meant to be a girl growing up in nineteenth century America. Furthermore, the Eurocentric ideals of gender roles and who worked and belonged in the private and domestic spheres were placed on girls and women regardless of race or class.[47]

In the American South, gender roles were also placed on the enslaved African and African American women. Even though textile production was not a gendered industry in

[46] Pat Ferrero, Elain Hedges, and Julie Silber, *Hearts and Hands: The Influence of Women & Quilts on American Society* (San Francisco: The Quilt Digest Press, 1987) 19-24.
[47] Miriam Forman-Brunell and Leslie Paris, *The Girls' History and Culture Reader: The Nineteenth Century* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2011).

Africa, the women were expected to carry out the textile activities on plantations.[48] Well-known Folklorist Gladys-Marie Fry has written extensively on African Americans and their traditions. In her book, *Stitched from the Soul*, she explores the quilting traditions of the enslaved. Fry used the interviews from freed slaves collected under the New Deal-era Works Progress Administration for much of her research. Slaves completed most of the textile production on plantations, and since the owners adhered to Eurocentric ideals of gender roles, enslaved women created most of the fabric, clothing, linens, and bedspreads in the South for both white and black people. While men were often still involved in textile production, the women were the main creators, and they passed their skills on to their daughters.[49]

Gender norms meant girls and women were required to learn and continually practice many forms of crafting including needlework, embroidery, sewing, knitting, and other skillsets. Textiles and the fiber arts encompass many different crafting activities. There are even more types of crafts outside of textiles such as pottery, basket weaving, and beading. There are countless books and articles published on all types of crafts including works detailing the history and impact of needlework, embroidery, knitting, and other craftwork in the United States.[50] Throughout these works, the authors include information about how women often worked together to learn and accomplish their tasks as well as talk, share stories, and enjoy each other's company. Women often met very informally, but they also created formal groups such as circles, bees, and guilds to craft

[48] Gladys-Marie Fry, *Stitched from the Soul: Slave Quilts from the Ante-Bellum South*, (New York: Dutton Studio Books, 1990) 14.
[49] Fry, *Stitched from the Soul*, 15, 52.
[50] Anne L. Macdonald, *No Idle Hands: The Social History of American Knitting* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988); Margaret Vincent, *The Ladies' Work Table: Domestic Needlework in Nineteenth-Century America* (Allentown, Pennsylvania: Allentown Art Museum, 1988); Susan Burrows Swan, *Plain & Fancy: American Women and their Needlework, 1700-1850* (New York : Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977).

together. Several graduate students have written dissertations related to crafting and the associated groupings.[51] Students have researched and written some of the only works that directly address crafting groups such as sewing circles. Laura Sapelly analyzes the social importance of sewing circles in women's lives as well as the similarities and effects of historic sewing circles on a modern sewing circle.[52] For her master's thesis, Gillian Ruland examines how modern women participate in knitting groups due to nostalgia and a desire to socialize and create a sense of community.[53] There does not appear to be any work that analyzes the role of quilting guilds or bees within women's lives in the United States.

Quilting

Quilting is one of the most popular crafts in the United States both historically and modernly, and it is particularly suited to group activities. Most early Americans did not practice quilting very often, because it was time consuming, and there were many other domestic duties women had to complete. Therefore, even the earliest quilts were demonstrations of wealth, time, value, and beauty for women and their home. There are several books on the history of quilting in the United States. Roderick Kiracofe and Mary Elizabeth Johnson explain the universality of quilting in nineteenth century America in their book about the history of quilting from preindustrial America to mid-twentieth century along with the process of fabric production for quilts. They explain that multiple

[51] Betsy Geer, "Taking Back the Knit: Creating Communities Via Needlecraft," Master thesis (University of London, 2004); Diana Greenwold, "Crafting New Citizens: Art and Handicraft in New York and Boston Settlement Houses, 1900-1945," PhD diss. (University of California, Berkeley, 2016); Maureen Marsh, "Knitting Rebellion: Elizabeth Zimmerman, Identity, and Craftsmanship in Post War America," PhD diss. (Purdue University, 2016).
[52] Laura Sapelly, "Pedagogies of Historical and Contemporary American Sewing Circles," PhD diss. (Pennsylvania State University, 2016)
[53] Gillian Ruland, "Stitching Together: An Exploration of Women's Sociality Through an Urban Knitting Group," Master's thesis (Georgia State University, 2010).

people can easily work together on a quilt, and during the activity the women would pass quilting knowledge and skills down to children and young women as well as engage in discussions about sewing, housekeeping, families, politics, religion, and feelings. Sitting down to quilt together, often known as a "quilting," became a major activity for nineteenth century women. Kiracofe and Johnson explain that, "[t]he quilts themselves were representations of those feelings which often has no other outlet. Sometimes quilts communicated emotions that the makers were only partly aware of, emotions that struggled for a fuller expression. They also spoke of women's concerns and commitments."[54] The outlet quilts and quilting provided for women was so valuable and universally necessary for women that the craft traversed across cultural boundaries in the United States. Groups with no original historic connection to quilting, such as the Amish and native Hawaiians, now have well-known quilting traditions.

Ferrero, Hedges, and Silber speak to women and their quilts' impact on culture and history in the United States. The authors also discuss how quilts are physical representations of women and their lives at the moment they were making the quilt. Their quilts express, "their responses to, and also their participation in, the major social, economic and political developments of their times. Through their quilts women became, in fact, not only witnesses to but active agents in important historical change."[55] One of the historic developments was the cult of domesticity that confined women to their homes and valued their domestic work and morality above all else. Quilting was an ideal activity within that restrictive system. Therefore, the proliferation of quilts and rise of quilting

[54] Roderick Kiracofe and Mary Elizabeth Johnson, *The American Quilt: A History of Cloth and Comfort 1750-1950* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1993) 2.
[55] Ferrero, Hedges, and Silber, 11.

activities among women is partially due to the cult of domesticity. Likewise, the cult encouraged women to make and gift quilts for special occasions and life milestones, which is a practice that continues today.[56] Despite the limitations to women's lives, they still worked within the system to gain agency. Restricting women to the domestic sphere helped women gain a group consciousness, and quilts, "had also become in the course of the century political emblems and acts that helped women to expand their world and thus to negotiate their transition to modern times."[57] Quilts played a role in how women grouped to participate in emancipatory activities.

Like many cultural practices, quilts went through many different phases and trends. For instance, friendship quilts were very popular, especially with many Americans leaving their families for the west. Likewise, Baltimore Album quilts were also prevalent with the rise of industrialization and increased commercial products, because many consist of store-bought quilt blocks. Linda Otto Lipsett has researched the friendship quilt fad in the mid-nineteenth century and the personal stories that lead up to these quilts.[58] Many quilting groups throughout the United States have researched and catalogued quilts. These efforts often result in publications. For instance, the North Carolina Quilt Project began in 1985 to survey quilts throughout the state, especially the older quilts. The book recognizes quilt trends and tells the history of North Carolina quilters.[59] Similarly, the Georgia Quilt Project arose out of the Olympic Gift of Quilts, which gave quilts made by groups and women across the state to selected countries' flag bearers at

[56] Ferrero, Hedges, and Silber, 28; Kiracofe and Johnson, 61.
[57] Ferrero, Hedges, and Silber, 11.
[58] Ferrero, Hedges, and Silber, 35-36; Linda Otto Lipsett, *Remember Me: Women & Their Friendship Quilts* (San Francisco: The Quilt Digest Press, 1985).
[59] Ellen Fickling Eanes and Ruth Haislip Roberson, *North Carolina Quilts* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

the closing ceremony of the 1996 Olympics. The book contains a history of quilts in Georgia as well as a chapter dedicated to the role of quilting groups, quilting parties, and sewing circles to women in the state. The authors recognize that, "quilting was more about social relationships and meeting the needs of the community than about producing a work of art…quilts have provided good tools for achieving practical and social ends…these women have found opportunities for communication, sharing their industriousness and community-wide caring, and expressing their heritage as Southerners and as women."[60] They also showcase some of the longest running sewing circles and quilting groups in Georgia. Additionally, the book also speaks about newer quilting groups, such as the Brown Sugar Stitchers Quilt Guild.[61] Many states have books such as these that describe their particular quilt history and quilts found in their area.

There are many famous quilts and quilters, but perhaps the most famous one of all is Harriet Powers and her two biblical quilts. Almost all books about quilts and quilting history mention Powers. She has had a great influence on the world of quilting. Harriet Powers resided in Athens, Georgia. She was born into slavery and lived to see emancipation. In 1886, she made a quilt that displays eleven scenes from the bible and exhibited it at a cotton fair in Athens. Her other famous quilt made in the 1890s depicts fifteen religious scenes. Both now reside in museums. There is fascinating research, analyses, and suppositions about Harriet Powers, her life, and the influences on her quilting.[62]

[60] Georgia Quilt Project and Anita Zaleski Weinraub, ed. *Georgia Quilts: Piecing Together a History* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2006) 233.
[61] Georgia Quilt Project and Anita Zaleski Weinraub, 228-233.
[62] Ferrero, Elain Hedges, and Julie Silber, 41-49; Georgia Quilt Project and Anita Zaleski Weinraub, ed. *Georgia Quilts: Piecing Together a History* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2006) 177-187; Gladys-Marie Fry, "'A Sermon in Patchwork:' New Light on Harriet Powers," in *Singular Women: Writing* Artists, ed. by Kristen Frederickson and Sarah E. Webb (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press,

African American Quilting Practices

While quilting did originate and travel with the European colonists to America, other racial, ethnic, and cultural groups started their own rich and varied quilting traditions that have in exchange had an immense impact on quilting history and practices as a whole in the United States. African Americans have very strong quilting traditions and history. Of course, this tradition is very closely tied with the history of slavery in the United States. While in Africa both men and women were involved in the production of textiles, Euro-centric gender roles and ideals were placed upon enslaved African women and their descendants. These women provided the bulk of textile production on plantations in the United States. This extended to the making of cloth, thread, and yarn as well as sewing clothing, linens, and bedding.[63] Slaves made quilts both for personal use in their own time and for their owner's family under the supervision of the mistress. Sewing could either link mistress and enslaved woman together or be the source of contention. This was often because sewing was a valuable skill, and the enslaved women who knew how to sew were seen as both a valuable commodity but also dangerous and rebellious.[64] Women could sew to make extra money, and some slaves were able to buy their freedom with their sewing skills. Therefore, sewing could be both a lucrative skill as well as yet another duty for enslaved women.

2003) 81-94; Gladys-Marie Fry, *Stitched from the Soul: Slave Quilts from the Ante-Bellum South,* (New York: Dutton Studio Books, 1990); Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "'A Quilt unlike Any Other:' Rediscovering the Work of Harriet Powers," in *Writing Women's History: A Tribute to Anne Firor Scott,* ed. Elizabeth Anne Payne (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011).

[63] Ferrero, Hedges, and Silber, 41-49; Jacqueline L. Tobin and Raymond G. Dobard, *Hidden in Plain View: The Secret Story of Quilts and the Underground Railroad* (New York: Doubleday, 1999) 80.

[64] Gladys-Marie Fry, *Stitched from the Soul: Slave Quilts from the Ante-Bellum South,* (New York: Dutton Studio Books, 1990) 34-39.

Quilting was prolific on plantations. While the white mistresses often did quilt, slaves completed the bulk of the work for everyone on the plantations. Gladys-Marie Fry wrote that the quilts slaves made were a medium for the women to express their emotions, hardships, and personal histories. This is evident through stitching patterns, consistency of stitches, color preferences, sudden color changes, and stains from tears or blood.[65] Since slaves were not allowed to read or write, they inscribed their history in their quilts. This included symbols from African mythology and cosmology. For instance, women may have incorporated sun motifs, red and white, and the Congo cross into their quilts, which are symbols from the Shango cult of Nigeria.[66] In Jacqueline Tobin and Raymond Dobard's book about quilts and the Underground Railroad, they write about how enslaved Africans, "who came to the New World brought with them many memories: memories of social organizations, religious values, and technological skills. When combined with the memories of people from nearby areas of Africa, or people from remote parts of Africa, a considerable body of knowledge was preserved and perpetuated in America."[67] These memories were continued in practices such as quilting. Quilting also allowed for slaves to continue their strong oral history and storytelling traditions. They passed down cultural knowledge both by having children help in the evenings and by having larger quilting parties for everyone.

Quiltings were a very popular activity for all enslaved people on a plantation, including the men. Fry used the New Deal's Works Progress Administration interviews of ex-slaves to gather information about these quiltings. While these parties were usually

[65] Fry, *Stitched from the Soul*, 1.
[66] Fry, *Stitched from the Soul*, 7.
[67] Tobin and Dobard, 8.

authorized by the master, they belonged to the slaves as their own activity and tradition that was a way to orally pass along their extensive cultural knowledge. Quiltings could be carefully planned and extravagant or informal and regular events. They often held competitions in order to quickly complete quilts since they were their main source of bedding. While men attended the quiltings, the actual work was completed by the women. The women were the ones who passed down stories that spoke of values, moral lessons, jokes, attitudes, rites of passage, and strategies for survival for those listening.[68] Quiltings were the precursor to quilting bees where women share in not only crafting skills and knowledge but also cultural traditions.

Slaves used quilts for even more than warm bedding, a way to pass knowledge down, and a means of inscribing their history. Enslaved people talked to each other using quilts. Several publications relate how slaves took advantage of quilts to communicate and usher each other to safety and freedom before and during the Civil War. Quilts signaled safe houses on the Underground Railroad or the movement of troops.[69] Both enslaved and freed African American women's use of crafting and quilting to communicate, lead others to freedom, provide a safe house, and advocate for the abolition of slavery is well documented. There are several publications dedicated solely to the topic. Historian Shirley J. Yee's discussion of African American women's antebellum activism contains the similar gendered themes of the domestic sphere and needlework.[70] Tobin and Dobard wrote the preeminent book on how quilts with encoded meanings for slaves and the Underground Railroad were "visual maps to freedom." Many traditional

[68] Fry, *Stitched from the Soul*, 63.
[69] Ferrero, Hedges, and Silber, 69-81; Fry, *Stitched from the Soul*, 65.
[70] Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992.)

patterns were created and named to send different messages to escaping slaves. Because quilts were normally aired out and displayed regularly, different patterned quilts shown at different times were codes to the enslaved communicating when it was safe, when to start preparing to leave, when to leave, and where to go.[71] This practice among others means that not only have African Americans and their ancestors directly contributed to traditional quilt patterns but they have also developed their own quilting styles and aesthetics.

As historians, both Elsa Barkley Brown and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich explain how African American quilting traditions have descended from African textile traditions. Some of the characteristics that make several African American quilting styles and patterns unique are color choices, fabric strips, and distinctive symmetry.[72] While this certainly does not mean all African American women's quilts adhere to a specific aesthetic, they do have a particular quilting tradition and history separate from other cultural groups. Moreover, African American women have long gathered together to craft. Quilt historian Kyra Hicks' book provides a resource to African American quilters in terms of quilt shops, research, fabric and pattern sources, and much more. While her suggestions may admittedly be a little out of date, Hicks offers an extensive bibliography of the research done on African American crafting and quilting history, style, and important people. She also supplies a timeline that details major moments and accomplishments related to African American quilting in the United States. For instance,

[71] Tobin and Dobard, 69-70.
[72] Elsa Barkley Brown, "African American Women's Quilting: A Framework for Conceptualizing and Teaching African-American Women's History," *Signs* 14, no. 4 (1989) 923-924; Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "'A Quilt unlike Any Other:' Rediscovering the Work of Harriet Powers," in *Writing Women's History: A Tribute to Anne Firor Scott*, ed. Elizabeth Anne Payne (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011).

the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) was established in 1896, and in 1980, Viola Canady and Etta Portlock founded the Daughters of Dorcas and Sons quilt guild in Washington D.C. Additionally, the Freedom Quilting Bee gave a quilting demonstration at the Smithsonian's first Folklife Festival.[73] The Freedom Quilting Bee was a cooperative composed of women from around Wilcox county, Alabama, including the quilters of Gee's Bend, who are nationally known for their distinctive quilts.

The quilters of Gee's Bend come from a community in Alabama that was active in the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. In March of 1965, Martin Luther King Jr. came to speak at the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Gee's Bend. The white residents and people in power in Wilcox county retaliated against African American support of civil rights by further isolating the community and keeping African Americans from voting. In 1965, Episcopal priest Francis X. Walker, a civil rights activist, was documenting voter discrimination in Wilcox county when he saw women's quilts hanging on a clothesline in Gee's Bend. He recognized the economic potential of the quilts for the women in the area, and he helped the women set up the Freedom Quilting Bee to earn extra income for themselves and the residents of Gee's Bend and surrounding communities. Soon thereafter, the women's quilting style became nationally recognized and acclaimed. They negotiated contracts with Sears & Roebuck and Bloomingdales.[74] Additionally, they have had several museum exhibitions over the years that showcase the women, their quilts, and their artistic style and choices. Moreover, there are many publications and websites that

[73] Kyra E. Hicks, *Black Threads: An African American Quilting Sourcebook*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2003) 212-219.
[74] John Beardsley, William Arnett, Paul Arnett, and Jane Livingston, *The Quilts of Gee's Bend* (Atlanta, GA: Tinwood Books, 2002) 12-15, 31; Mark Scala, ed. *Creation Story: Gee's Bend Quilts and the Art of Thornton Dial* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012) 40-46.

detail the history and quilt aesthetic of the quilters of Gee's Bend and the Freedom Quilting Bee.[75] These women are an extremely well-known crafting group, and they exemplify the African American quilting history, traditions, and styles.

Native American Quilting Traditions

Another group of women who have incredibly strong crafting and quilting histories and traditions are Native Americans in the United States. Throughout their entire history, Native Americans have developed countless types, forms, and styles of crafting, and there are numerous books that discuss Native American traditional crafting. Michael Johnson and Bill Yenne provide a comprehensive book that demonstrates the immense amount of crafts, skills, and variations across the different tribes in North America. Among others, they discuss beadwork, baskets, moccasins, pottery, bonnets, and leggings.[76] Both Carol Williams and Theda Perdue have edited books that look at Native American women's lives.[77] Throughout each book, there are themes of crafting. For instance, Colleen O'Neill discusses the New Deal projects Native American women were involved with during the Great Depression. They worked on the Federal Emergency Relief Administration mattress project and the Works Project Administration sewing

[75] John Beardsley, William Arnett, Paul Arnett, and Jane Livingston, *The Quilts of Gee's Bend* (Atlanta, GA: Tinwood Books, 2002); Laura Morris, "New York Foundation Records: the Freedom Quilting Bee Cooperative," October 11, 2011, https://www.nypl.org/blog/2011/10/11/freedom-quilting-bee-cooperative (accessed October 28, 2019); Mark Scala, ed. *Creation Story: Gee's Bend Quilts and the Art of Thornton Dial* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012); Nancy Callahan, *The Freedom Quilting Bee* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1987).; Souls Grow Deep, "Gee's Bend Quiltmakers," accessed October 28, 2019, http://www.soulsgrowndeep.org/gees-bend-quiltmakers; Susan Goldman Rubin, *The Quilts of Gee's Bend* (New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2017).

[76] Michael Johnson and Bill Yenne, *Arts & Crafts of the Native American Tribes* (Buffalo, NY: Firefly Books, 2011).

[77] Carol Williams, ed. *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2012); Theda Perdue, ed. *Sifters: Native American Women's Lives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

project.[78] Both of these were sewing orientated. Furthermore, Williams ends the book with a transcript of a women teaching a beading lesson.[79] There are many books published that discuss and teach readers about Native American crafting history and traditions.[80] These include books about Native American quilting. Today, many books unfortunately contain quilts patterns that either may be sacred to Native Americans or do not obtain consent or give credit to the people who made the quilts.[81]

Native American quilt history and traditions do not often get the recognition they deserve, because they did not quilt prior to contact with colonists. For example, the Seminole are well-known for their patchwork clothing. The origins of their craft may have come from European colonists or escaped slaves who learned to quilt on plantations.[82] Much like other quilting traditions, Native Americans use and have used quilts for bedding, currency, fundraising, wraps to carry babies, means of communicating history and stories, and gifts during important life milestones. In addition to these uses, they have incorporated quilts into Native American specific practices. For instance, the Ojibwa use quilts underneath their drums to prevent the instruments from contacting the

[78] Colleen O'Neill, "Charity or Industry?: American Indian Women and Work Relief in the New Deal Era," in *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism*, ed. by Carol Williams (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2012) 193-209.
[79] Beth H. Piatote, "Beading Lesson," in *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism*, ed. by Carol Williams (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2012) 268-270.
[80] Alexander Dawkins, *Understanding Northwest Coast Indigenous Jewelry: The Art, the Artists, the History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019); Anne D'Alleva, *Native American Arts & Cultures* (Worcester, MA: Davis Publications, 1993); Bill Mercer and Portland Art Museum, *People of the River: Native Arts of the Oregon Territory* (Portland, OR: University of Washington Press, 2005); Colin F. Taylor and Joyce Willcocks, *Native American Arts and Crafts* (New York: Smithmark, 1995); Judy Hall, Jill Oaks, and Sally Qimmiu'naaq Webster, *Sanatujut Pride in Women's Work: Copper and Caribou Inuit Clothing Traditions* (Hull, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1994); Robin Langley Sommer, *Native American Art* (New York : Smithmark, 1994).
[81] Marsha L. MacDowell and C. Kurt Dewhurst, *To Honor and Comfort: Native Quilting Traditions* (Santa Fe, NM: Museum of New Mexico Press in association with the Michigan State University Museum, 1997) 89.
[82] Johnson and Yenne, 148.

ground. The Odawa gift quilts during their naming ceremonies. Many tribes also have culturally important ceremonial giveaways where numerous quilts are gifted throughout the community.[83] In addition to these uses, while the process of making a quilt is the same for all other groups, Native American women impart their own history and culture into their quilts through color, patterns, names, and material choices. Quilters often took traditional blocks and patterns and renamed them with more familiar terms. For example, the log cabin pattern is often called the arrowhead. Oppositely, there are many patterns in widespread quilting culture that are named after nature and Native American traditions: thunderbird, arrowhead, Indian head, maple leaf, Indian hatchet, star, and bear's paw. Furthermore, the number four is symbolic to many Native Americans, and the choice of design, patterns, and stitching will often reflect groupings of four. In the quilt stitching, Native American quilters also incorporate stars, arrowheads, tipis, thunderbirds, warbonnets, and pipes into their stitch patterns in addition to non-Native patterns of fans, clamshells, and outline quilting. Moreover, Native American quilts very often incorporate traditional myths, legends, and stories into their quilt designs and patterns, including pictorial quilts.[84]

Furthermore, certain quilt patterns, styles, and usage are specific to Native American tribes. The Sioux and other Plains tribes are famous for their star quilts. These quilts are used throughout their daily lives as well as in important ceremonies and events. When a member of the community passes, the women often gather together to quilt day and night in order to provide enough quilts to give to each pallbearer and the person who

[83] MacDowell and Dewhurst, 4, 49-50.
[84] MacDowell and Dewhurst, 23-25, 54-57.

conducts the funeral ceremony as well as lay one on top of the coffin.[85] Historian Birgit Hans discusses in depth the role star quilts play in the identity and culture of Native Americans on the northern plains.[86] Another practice is the Hopi's important naming ceremony for their babies. It is traditional to give a quilt along with the name to the child.[87] Additionally, Native Hawaiians are famous for their particular quilting style and traditions. Their quilt patterns are often specific to and owned by a quiltmaker and passed down through their family. It is the family's decision to gift or share a pattern with others.[88] Art historian Marsha McDowell offers an extensive history and explanation of Native American quilting and the associated cultural traditions. Throughout the rest of the book, other writers focus on specific practices within different tribes and of particular artists. Like many quilting books, this published work arose from a Native Quilting Research and Exhibition Project by Michigan State University, which also resulted in the creation of the Michigan Quilt Project.[89] Therefore, most Native Americans have treasured quilting traditions, and throughout their history with the craft, Native American women have gathered together to quilt.

Since the introduction of quilting to Native Americans, the women were encouraged to quilt in a group. Missionaries often established Ladies' Aids Societies and sewing circles to foster relationships with Native Americans. These types of groups allowed Native American women to gather together, work cooperatively, fulfill

[85] MacDowell and Dewhurst, 33, 48.
[86] Birgit Hans, "The Star Quilt on the Northern Plains: A Symbol of American Indian Identity," *North Dakota History* 77, no. 3-4 (2012): 24-39.
[87] MacDowell and Dewhurst, 43-44.
[88] MacDowell and Dewhurst, 38-41.
[89] Marsha L. MacDowell and C. Kurt Dewhurst, *To Honor and Comfort: Native Quilting Traditions* (Santa Fe, NM: Museum of New Mexico Press in association with the Michigan State University Museum, 1997).

"traditional obligations of generosity," and participate in a form of leadership.[90] Thereafter, mothers and grandmothers taught sewing and quilting skills to their children. McDowell states that whether mostly individuals or groups did most of the quiltmaking depends on the tribe or community's traditions. Regardless, quilting bees and parties were a significant tradition for most tribes. Odawa elder Veronica Medicine of Harbor Spring, Michigan states just how important the quilting bees were for passing down traditional knowledge, because they, "learn a great deal from each other. You listen to what the older ladies have to say and then the second generation and then quite often the third generation says very little because we're listening and learning." The children learn not just how to quilt but the history of their people. The gathering was also an opportunity for socializing.[91]

Today, Native American women gather in churches, homes, tribal centers, community centers, senior citizen centers, recreation programs, and cooperatives to share in and pass down quilting knowledge and cultural history and traditions.[92] Native American quilters use their quilts as a medium to express how they experience and navigate their cultural identities and struggles. The women's quilts often reflect the challenges that come with balancing two different cultures and the added expectations women face in their everyday lives. Quilts also serve as a healing mechanism to express and deal with the injustices Native Americans face both in the past and today. Lastly, like other quilting traditions, Native Americans exhibit their quilts to share their passion, skills, and lessons with other women and Native Americans.[93]

[90] Hans, 35-36.
[91] MacDowell and Dewhurst, 5-8, 14-15.
[92] MacDowell and Dewhurst, 67, 91.
[93] MacDowell and Dewhurst, 4, 67-75, 83-84.

Historic Crafting Groups and their Activities

A common theme throughout all women's crafting and quilting history and traditions are women gathering to quilt and other crafting activities. Despite this fact, there are very few publications that revolve solely around crafting groups. Women's historic craft gatherings are typically an aside or secondary aspect in books and articles about crafting or women's history. Historian Kimberly Schmidt has written about the Cheyenne and Mennonite sewing circles, and historian Linda Hixon published an article about the Hopedale sewing circle in Massachusetts. Schmidt examines how missionary Mennonite women connected with Cheyenne women using their shared crafting traditions. Mennonite women have a sewing circle tradition called Naheverien. Cheyenne women joined exclusive guilds called Moneneheo. Women in Moneneheo were highly skilled crafters, and their status as part of the guild lent them wealth and autonomy within their communities. The Mennonite women used their shared traditions to start sewing circles to both connect with and manipulate and bribe Cheyenne women. In spite of the Mennonite intentions, Cheyenne women continued the sewing circles until at least the 1970s as a practice of getting together to socialize and craft.[94] Somewhat similarly, Hixon discusses the Hopedale Sewing Circle. While this group was founded by nineteen women and nineteen men with equality in mind, the women were the leaders of the group and constituted the bulk of the activities. The Hopedale Sewing Circle was a religious organization that advocated "Practical Christian" ideals through both pamphlets and preaching as well as their charitable work. Through their bees, the members made clothing, bedding, quilts, carpets, and straw braiding for people in need. Several members

[94] Kimberly D. Schmidt, "Moneneheo and Naheverien: Cheyenne and Mennonite Sewing Circles, Convergences and Conflicts, 1890—1970," *Great Plains Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2011): 8-18.

also advocated at women's rights conventions.[95] In fact throughout the history of women gathering together to craft and socialize there are many themes of charity, social engagement, and activism.

Often women sewed and quilted with intentions to give their works away. This naturally led to their participation in other efforts such as abolition, temperance, and women's suffrage.[96] Women and others who stayed at home during WWI are well-known for the extremely widespread and effective knitting campaign. Women knitted in any spare time they had and everywhere they went. This coincided with many other war relief efforts, such as food collections.[97] Often the root of activism and reform was charity performed by women's organizations. Eleven upper class women established the Boston Fragment Society in 1812, and the organization continues to this day. They completed their work in sewing circles, making clothing and other items to give away. Historian Lori Ginzberg gives a complete overview of white women's efforts of reform before the outbreak of the civil war. Women were often restricted to traditionally gendered female skills and the woman's sphere of the home and religion to work on their causes.[98] In spite of women's restricted movements and position in American society, they used their crafting skills and work as a form of autonomy and mechanism for gathering and discussing topics important to them.

[95] Linda H. Hixon, "The Women of the Hopedale Sewing Circle, 1848-63," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 44, no. 1 (2016): 118-132.
[96] Ferrero, Hedges, and Silber, 11-15.
[97] Dorothy Schneider and Carl J. Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920* (New York: Facts on File, 1993) 216; Anne L. Macdonald, *No Idle Hands: The Social History of American Knitting* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988) 199-238; Lars Olsson, *Women's Work and Politics in WWI America: The Munsingwear Family of Minneapolis* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018).
[98] Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women in Antebellum Reform* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2000) 27-28.

Crafting in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

While women have long used their crafting skills as forms of activism, there are few publications about this part of women's crafting history. As time went on and women began to employ their crafting skills more and more beyond making items for their everyday usage or as examples of their knowledge, skill, and value, crafting began to transform. Craft started to become more of an artform. While crafting like quilting was always a form of artistic expression for women, they mainly utilized their skills to make necessary items or abide by gender norms; however, in the twentieth century, women increasingly utilized crafting as their creative outlet. Even today, there are major discussions about whether craft can be considered art, which crafts are art, examples of crafts that are art, and explanations of the transition of craft into the art realm. Even without the connotations that craftwork is not art, women have traditionally been excluded from the sphere of high art. Art historian Linda Nochlin offers an overview of women's participation in the world of high art as well as a feminist critique of art history.[99] The transformation and debate of craft and art began with industrialization and the introduction of the Arts and Crafts movement. Women no longer had to produce every single item for their homes. With the standardization and mechanization of everyday items, women's traditional craftwork became an art form. Janet Kardon writes about the ideal home and changing gender roles and expectations of women during the early twentieth century.[100] While women historically completed most craftwork, the art world started to exclude women even as they welcomed crafting.

[99] Linda Nochlin, *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988).
[100] Janet Kardon, ed. *The Ideal Home 1900-1920: The History of Twentieth Century American Craft* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. in association with the American Craft Museum, 1993) 29-32.

It was not until the mid-twentieth century that the art world started to recognize women's place within the world of art and crafting. Art historian Elissa Auther notes three main themes of women's inclusion in high art and craft where the debate of craft as art is based in a, "classification system fundamental to the definition of art, aesthetic experience, and the hierarchy," and, "that the opposition of art to craft grew out of and was maintained in part by social hierarchies of gender and race…the opposition of art to craft was recognized as the root of a range of additional oppositions affecting the value of women's art past and present."[101] Therefore, once the art world finally started to include craftwork, it was organized to leave women out. In terms of quilting, Auther explains how quilting was "discovered" by the art world in 1971 with the Whitney Museum of American Art's exhibition *Abstract Design in American Quilts*. Subsequent exhibitions examined quilt patterns, iconography, regional styles, and quilts made by named, individual women.[102] Karin Peterson described the transformation of quilting as, "existing along a continuum from those who produced traditional quilts, to others producing nontraditional works but not adopting an artistic identity, to those who produce fiber art works or art quilts and who consider themselves professional artists."[103] Consequently, quilting morphed into a mode of craft that people use both for utilitarian purposes as well as a form of artistic expression.

In the United States, several movements of the 1960s and 1970s revitalized crafting not just as artwork but also as an activity. The back-to-the-land movement, ever

[101] Elissa Auther, *String, Felt, Thread: The Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010) 98.
[102] Auther, 128-129.
[103] Karin E. Peterson, "How the Ordinary Becomes Extraordinary: The Modern Eye and the Quilt as Art Form," in *Extra/Ordinary: Craft and Contemporary Art*, ed. by Maria Elena Buszek (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 109.

changing clothing trends, and revival of traditional arts by minority communities focused attention back to crafting. Moreover, the bicentennial of the United States brought renewed interest and increased funding for craft and folk art. One of the major movements of the 1970s and the 1980s pertaining to crafting traditions is the feminist reclamation of women's history with crafting.[104] Feminists started the Ladies' Sewing Circle and Terrorist Society around 1974 to discuss the movement through the traditional medium of sewing circles and crafting.[105] The feminist movements of the 1970s led to increased recognition of women's contribution to craft and art as well as the usage of crafting by women to express their need for acknowledgement, equality, and equity.

Rozsika Parker is one of the foremost writers of this time who related crafting to feminism. Parker wrote several books and articles about women, feminism, craft, and art, but her most recognizable and applauded publication is *The Subversive Stitch*.[106] In her book, Parker discusses how needlework became the ultimate expression and definition of femininity in the Western world. She also explains how needlework, "became a part of a move to transform the relationship of art to society, and the place of women within society."[107] Parker published this unprecedented and unparalleled feminist book that not only explained how crafting became such a gendered activity but also how women have gained agency through their crafting. One of the most well-known examples of feminist artwork during this time was *The Dinner Party*. *The Dinner Party* was an explosive 1970s feminist art exhibit created by Judy Chicago that the Brooklyn Museum still shows

[104] Auther, 25.
[105] Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Fray: Art + Textile Politics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017) 1.
[106] Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, eds. *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement, 1970-85* (London: Pandora, 1987); Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013); Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co, 1984).
[107] Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*, 189.

today.[108] The exhibit consists of three tables arranged in a triangle with a total of thirty-nine places that each represent and celebrate a notable woman from prehistory to the mid-twentieth century. Jane Gerhard has written a book examining the creation of *The Dinner Party* and its effect on pop culture, feminism, and feminist activism. *The Dinner Party* celebrates the textile and craftwork women participate in through both domestic and artistic craft.[109] Both these examples are still referenced today as the preeminent feminist and artistic expressions of women's traditional craftwork.

Another development in recent decades are the changes in the civic and social lives of American people. Robert Putnam wrote the leading book on social capital in the United States. Social capital is the value social networks provide for both people and communities' productivity, health, and happiness. Individuals are better off if the community as a whole is well connected and offers a robust social network.[110] In his book, Putnam noted that Americans felt in the 1980s and 1990s that there was a break down in their communities. He argues that Americans' civic and social engagement has moved both up and down throughout the country's history. Putnam states that individuals now may be no less engaged than their predecessors. They just may be engaged in different ways, and there will be a revival in America's social capital.[111] Quilting guilds and other crafting groups absolutely qualify as social capital for women and their communities. Participation in and proliferation of crafting groups will only grow as the social and civic engagement rises in the United States.

[108] Judy Chicago collaborated with many crafters, creators, and artists to put the exhibit together, but she only credit them later.
[109] Jane F. Gerhard, *The Dinner Party: Judy Chicago and the Power of Popular Feminism, 1970-2007* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2013).
[110] Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000) 19-20.
[111] Putnam, 25-26.

Modernly, crafting is highly present throughout people's lives, and the practices are continuously evolving. Art historian Julia Bryan-Wilson explores the questions of how a sewing needle can be seen as a "dangerous tool" and how "female collective textile making as a process…might upend conventions, threaten state structures, or wreak political havoc."[112] Throughout her book, Bryan-Wilson examines crafting and textiles in relation to LGBTQ+ and feminist craft activities and activism as well as the AIDS Quilts. Furthermore, she explores how crafting has been used as forms of protest since the 1990s. There are several publications that discuss modern forms of crafting, people's use of crafting to form communities as support systems, crafting as work and business models, and crafting as a form of activism and protest.[113] In fact, Betsy Greer coined the term craftivism online, which, "represents the merger of 'craft' and 'activism', political activism means to change the world through passionate creation, even if in small scale."[114] Craftivism is practiced by crafters both in the real world and online. The internet has had the most effect on women's crafting practices. Artists and art historians Jennifer Marsh and Courtney Weida explain how internet forums are complementing traditional crafting communities where, "[w]eb dialogues, exchanges, and collaborations

[112] Bryan-Wilson, 1.
[113] Ann Rippin and Sheena J. Vachhani, "Craft as Resistance: A Conversation about Craftivism, Embodied Inquiry, and Craft-based Methdologies. in *The Organization of Craft Work: Identities, Meanings, and Materiality*, ed. by Emma Bell, Gianluigi Mangia, Scott Taylor, and Maria Laura Toraldo (New York: Routledge, 2019) 217-234; Emma Bell, Gianluigi Mangia, Scott Taylor, and Maria Laura Toraldo, eds. *The Organization of Craft Work: Identities, Meanings, and Materiality* (New York: Routledge, 2019); Janis Jeffries, "Crocheted Strategies: Women Crafting Their Own Communities," *Textile* 14, no. 1 (2016): 14-35; Nicola J. Thomas and Doreen Jakob, "Making Livelihoods within Communities of Practice: The Place of Guild Organisations in the Craft Sector," in *The Organization of Craft Work: Identities, Meanings, and Materiality*, ed. by Emma Bell, Gianluigi Mangia, Scott Taylor, and Maria Laura Toraldo (New York: Routledge, 2019) 176-195; Otto Von Busch, "Exploring Net Political Craft: From Collective to Connective," *Intellect Limited* 1 (2010): 113-124; Shelby Soloman and Blake Mathias, "Crafted in America: From Culture to Profession," in *The Organization of Craft Work: Identities, Meanings, and Materiality*, ed. by Emma Bell, Gianluigi Mangia, Scott Taylor, and Maria Laura Toraldo (New York: Routledge, 2019) 41-59.
[114] Von Busch, 117.

also provide participants with opportunities to reclaim and/or revise artistic identities and conceptions of past and present craft communities."[115] The internet is providing greater contact between women to form crafting communities.

The Do-It-Yourself movement, internet forums, blogs, and websites like Pinterest and YouTube not only extends the crafting community for women but also engages other audiences such as the younger generation.[116] This helps further convey crafting skills and traditions from one person or group to another. Modern, Western culture encourages individuality, competition, and isolation. The continued presence of crafting groups and communities both in the physical and digital world contribute to necessary social and collaborative practices.[117] Not everything is online either. There are many publications that contain patterns, lessons, and DIYs to teach women how to craft for personal use, charity, and activism as well as information on how to start their own crafting groups.[118] Therefore, crafting groups such as sewing circles, knitting circles, quilting bees, and guilds have continued throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries into the twenty-first century as a treasured practice traditionally associated with women and their craft.

[115] Jennifer Marsh and Courtney Weida, "Remixed/Unstitched Digital Communities of Contemporary Craft," in *Crafting Creativity & Creating Craft: Craftivism, Art Education, and Contemporary Craft Culture,* ed. by Courtney Lee Weida (Rotterdam, the Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 2014) 37-43.
[116] Von Busch, 114.
[117] Celia Caro, "Crafting Popular Culture: A Hands on Approach," in *Crafting Creativity & Creating Craft: Craftivism, Art Education, and Contemporary Craft Culture*, ed. by Courtney Lee Weida (Rotterdam, the Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 2014) 14.
[118] Betsy Greer, *Knitting for Good!: A Guide to Creating Personal, Social & Political Change, Stitch by Stitch* (Boston: Trumpeter, 2008); Betty Christiansen, *Knitting for Peace: Make the World a Better Place One Stitch at a Time* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Change, 2006); Katherine Bell, *Quilting for Peace: Make the World a Better Place One Stitch at a Time* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 2009); Suzyn Jackson, ed. *Knit It Together: Patterns and Inspiration for Knitting Circles* (Minneapolis, MN: Voyageur Press, 2009).

CHAPTER 2: THE COTTON PATCH QUILTERS QUILT GUILD

Interviewee Profiles

After attending one of the Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild meetings and four charity bee meetings, five current members of the guild agreed to an interview. They answered questions about their experience with sewing, quilting, the guild, and its members as well as any knowledge they had of the guild's history and organization. These women are only a small percentage of the members of the guild as there are approximately 100 members at any time, but their answers provide information on the role the Cotton Patch Quilters plays in their lives. Their experiences reveal how women's participation in quilting guilds is part of the American woman's intangible cultural heritage.

Sheila Shepherd has been sewing since she was a child when her mother taught her how to use a sewing machine, make pillows, and hand embroider. While her mother and maternal grandmother had always sewn clothing, they were not quilters, but her maternal great-grandmother was a prolific quilter. Mrs. Shepherd has quilts that she made dating back to 1890. Even though her mother and grandmother did not quilt much, they still knew how to in order to make quilts for bedding and such. Additionally, Mrs. Shepherd's mother would go to their church with her young children, and the women would gather together to quilt on an old-fashioned quilting frame, socialize, eat, and watch the kids. Her father can also quilt and cross stitch. She remembers once when her parents really needed a new bedspread, her father's grandmother gave them a large piece

of scrap fabric from the pajama factory she worked in at the time. Her mother cut the pieces using cardboard as the templates, and then her parents spent time together quilting the bedspread on an old-fashioned frame. Mrs. Shepherd also has an aunt who quilts, but she did not discover their shared passion until after she learned to quilt as an adult.

While Mrs. Shepard sewed at home, she also sewed in her home economics course in middle school. In that class, she had to make a blouse from start to finish. She was so excited to pick out the fabric and start on the pattern, but when it was all done, she thought it looked horrible on her. That experience taught her that she was not interested in tailoring clothing. Instead, she decided to take a quilting class when she was twenty. She was about to get married and knew that if she did not learn beforehand, she may never start quilting. The class taught her how to quilt from scratch with hand piecing and quilting with squares, triangles, curves, and applique. Today, Mrs. Shepherd's quilting preference lies in handwork. She will machine-piece a quilt but do all the quilting by hand, usually in the car or on her lunch break. Ever since that class, Mrs. Shepherd has quilted, but she did not join a guild until her youngest son was almost graduated from high school.

Mrs. Shepherd joined the Cotton Patch Quilters the night she went to her first meeting. The deadline to become a member and be able to enter the coming quilt show was that night. She knew that she was going to have an empty nest soon and would have more time to quilt and get involved with a guild. Only the year after she joined, Mrs. Shepherd became the guild's secretary. The following year she was the program manager. She has now been in the guild for eight years. Due to her job, she has not been able to interact with other members as much as she would like. At one point there was a

bee that met in the evening once a month that she really enjoyed, but it has not continued. When she retires from her position as a deputy clerk, Mrs. Shepherd looks forward to being able to quilt more and with other members as well. She is also going to start a business to do long arm quilting for people. In the meantime, Mrs. Shepherd is busy as the Cotton Patch Quilters' current president and completing quilts for her family, friends, and church members.[119]

Like Mrs. Shepherd, Sue Lawrence's mother also taught her to sew when she was eight or nine. Mrs. Lawrence still has two sturdy metal machines passed down from her

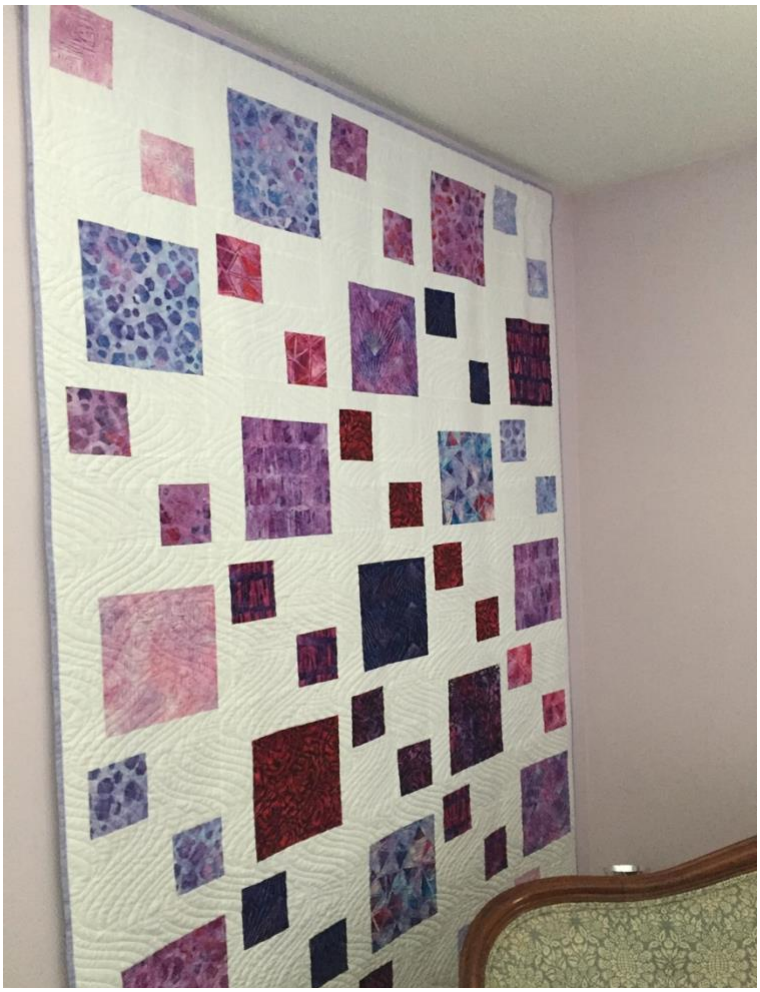

Figure 3. Sue Lawrence, "Stepping Stones," January 2019 (Photo taken by the author and used with the permission of Sue Lawrence)

[119] Sheila Shepherd, Athens, Georgia, October 24, 2019.

mother—a Singer 301 and a Bernina—that are both still easy to use, reliable, and very sentimental for her. Her mother was also a prolific spinner and weaver. She learned when Mrs. Lawrence and her siblings were in college. Her mother was part of a weavers guild in Michigan, and when they moved to Maine, she participated in community events like historic demonstrations of weaving and such. Over the years, Mrs. Lawrence taught herself to quilt. One day when she was at a local fabric store looking for quilt materials, she ran into a woman who invited her to their guild and charity bee meetings. Mrs. Lawrence thought that since her mother "joined [a guild] and participated in one and seemed to enjoy the social aspect and the learning and then teaching others," that it "made a lot of sense to [her] when [she] bumped into someone [who] said you should

Figure 4. Sue Lawrence sewing at the charity bee (Photo courtesy of Vicki Bauer)

join or think about it, come visit us, you know, a couple of times and see what you think."[120]

Since joining the Cotton Patch Quilters, Mrs. Lawrence has diligently gone to the charity bee's weekly meetings as well as two of the guild's quilt retreats. She continues to quilt and meet up with some of the women she met at the retreats. One of her favorite elements of the charity bee is their thriftiness. They do not waste any scraps. Instead, the bee makes dog beds filled with their fabric scraps and donates them to animal shelters and the humane society. Being part of the charity bee is very important for Mrs. Lawrence as a way to give back to the community. She sees the Cotton Patch Quilters as a valuable resource of women with a huge amount of knowledge and skills to share.

Figure 5. Ellen Nelson sewing at the charity bee (Photo courtesy of Vicki Bauer)

[120] Sue Lawrence, Athens, Georgia, September 22, 2019.

Outside of the guild, Mrs. Lawrence also volunteers with a young designer sewing program that teaches young people how to design and make clothing from start to finish. In addition to quilting for the charity bee and her friends and family, Mrs. Lawrence also makes pottery at the local pottery studio and enjoys other craft projects.[121]

In fact, many of the women are passionate about crafts other than quilting. Ellen Nelson regularly knitted with another woman. She was the friend who invited Mrs. Nelson to the Cotton Patch Quilters. Her mother taught her how to sew and make clothes, and she took a home economics class in high school as well. Over the years, Mrs. Nelson mostly sewed clothing for her husband and kids. She would often call her mother for advice on certain aspects of sewing like how to turn a collar. Even so, Mrs. Nelson never thought to quilt, because it involved cutting fabric up into smaller pieces only to sew them back together again. Only when her friend invited her to the guild's meeting and asked her to join did Mrs. Nelson start quilting. Her friend also asked her to help edit the Cotton Patch Quilters' newsletter, and Mrs. Nelson took it over when her friend moved away from Athens. Despite her original understanding of quilting, Mrs. Nelson has remained in the guild—largely due to the charity bee. She stays because she enjoys creating quilts for altruistic reasons. She is currently co-chair of the community service committee and charity bee. Mrs. Nelson is also a retired teacher. Now, she helps teach new guild members as well as brand new sewers quilting during the charity bee. Additionally, she teaches a child from her church to sew. While she quilts and crafts for herself and her family, she also makes items for her church. For example, Mrs. Nelson has made stoles for her pastor. She is part of the Cotton Patch Quilters because she

[121] Sue Lawrence, Athens, Georgia, September 22, 2019.

greatly enjoys making quilts for those in need and working with other women to collectively make those quilts.[122]

The other chair of the charity bee, Vicki Bauer, feels very similarly. To Mrs. Bauer, the Cotton Patch Quilters and charity bee is a community of like-minded, generous people. One of her favorite aspects of the charity bee is its anonymity. They donate their quilts as an organization with no one person's name attached to a quilt. She loves working collectively with the women to make the charity quilts every Wednesday morning. Like the other women, Mrs. Bauer learned to sew from her mother and a home economics class. The women in her family have always sewn. Her grandmother was a tailor, and her mother worked in alterations; however, no one had ever quilted. Only when a friend from Mrs. Bauer's office wanted help to make a quilt for her future grandson did she start quilting. They joined the guild together in 1999 as a way to learn to quilt. Over the years, Mrs. Bauer has grown close to other members of the guild. They will see each other at fabric stores or go out to dinner regularly. Nowadays, Mrs. Bauer much prefers quilting to sewing clothing. She has tried to teach several of her grandchildren and other family members to sew, but mostly she quilts and does other crafts for them.[123] The Cotton Patch Quilters is the only guild or crafting group that Mrs. Bauer has been a part of since she started quilting.

One of the other members of the guild and charity bee has participated in other guilds before the Cotton Patch Quilters. Susan Brassard was a member of two guilds in south Florida. When she and her family were getting ready to move to Athens, Mrs. Brassard knew she wanted to find a local guild to join. She originally joined the Cotton

[122] Ellen Nelson, Athens, Georgia, October 9, 2019.
[123] Vicki Bauer, Athens, Georgia, October 23, 2019.

Patch Quilters ten years ago when they bought their house in Athens. Although they did not completely move to Athens until three years later, Mrs. Brassard wanted to receive the newsletter and keep up to date with the Cotton Patch Quilters' activities. She has been an active member for over six years since moving into their house. While Mrs. Brassard's mother did know how to sew some, her aunt taught her how to sew clothing and knit. She made dresses when she was a teenager and later maternity clothing for herself as she did not like the fashions available to her at the time. In the late 1990s, Mrs. Brassard learned to quilt when her friend wanted them to go to a quilting class. She learned the basics from the class, but she joined a guild and one of their bees to learn a lot more. While she still does other crafts, or as she calls them, diseases, Mrs. Brassard quilts more than anything. She likes making quilts for the charity bee most, because they are going to good causes and they are appreciated. She spends time with the women every Wednesday at the charity bee and goes on the guild's retreats. Through the guild, Mrs. Brassard greatly enjoys having a community, and the members offer camaraderie and support for each other's projects.[124]

Each of these women have sewed for most of their life. Their mothers or aunts taught them on top of home economics courses. They have sewed mostly for practicality. They later learned to quilt on their own or through the guild, and they have found enjoyment and satisfaction from quilting. They joined the guild to practice and further their quilting in addition to gathering a social network of other women. They share their love of quilting as well as the knowledge they have garnered with each other. Furtermore, they are practicing their creativity as well as giving back to their community by being a

[124] Susan Brassard, Athens, Georgia, October 16, 2019.

part of the guild. These are aspects of their intangible cultural heritage that the women participate in and continue through the Cotton Patch Quilters.

Guild Development and Experience

The Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild's history and activities reveal the role it plays in these women's intangible cultural heritage. The guild's development over time demonstrates the increasing function the group has in the practice of women's quilting and crafting. The Cotton Patch Quilters' membership has grown over the years as well as the variety and extent of the guild's activities. The women participate in their monthly meetings, quilt shows, retreats, and community service. The guild donates quilts to many organizations in the community. At the same time, they are teaching quilting and passing knowledge onto each other and people in the community. Therefore, the women's experiences in the Cotton Patch Quilters is part of their intangible cultural heritage.

Since these women all joined after the Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild establishment in 1985, they do not have first-hand experience or know how the guild began or how the name was chosen. Instead, there is limited information on the guild's website. Marilyn Cole, Barbara Sanders, and Jean Tarpley were the three women who

Figure 6. The Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild logo (Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild, https://www.cpquilters.org)

established the Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild in 1985, and they held the first organization meeting in October. Some of the original members are still in the guild. Mrs. Nelson recently discovered that as a gift to and acknowledgement of the Cotton Patch Quilters earliest members, they do not pay dues to the guild. When the members first started meeting, they paid $6.50 for annual dues.[125] By 1991, the guild raised dues to $10.[126] Today, each member pays $30 for dues. Additionally, anyone who wishes to participate in the Cotton Patch Quilters' quilt show has to join the guild and pay dues for that year in order to enter a quilt.[127]

When the guild first began, they were a small group, but their membership has grown and moved since then. The guild started with approximately fifteen members that met at a quilt and fabric store, the Berry Patch. In 1989, the guild began to meet in the Ware-Lyndon House, a historic house museum with an impressive decorative arts collection. Only a short while later, the city of Athens built a large addition to the historic house called the Lyndon House Arts Center. This building has gallery space, meeting rooms, and rooms for the community to gather, craft, and create art. Since the Cotton Patch Quilters met in the Ware-Lyndon House before the new center opened in 1994, they have been allowed to use the facilities at no charge.[128] About forty to sixty members of the guild will attend their monthly meetings in the Lyndon House's community room. Additionally, the charity bee meets in the Fiber Arts room every Wednesday morning. Other guilds do not have the same facilities available to them. Mrs. Brassard was amazed

[125] Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild, "History: 1980's," https://www.cpquilters.org/history-1980s/ (accessed December 17, 2019).
[126] Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild, "History: 1990-1995," https://www.cpquilters.org/history-1990-1995/ (accessed December 17, 2019).
[127] Sheila Shepherd, Athens, Georgia, October 24, 2019.
[128] Ellen Nelson, Athens, Georgia, October 9, 2019.

when she moved from Florida at the space in the Lyndon House. In her previous guilds, the charity groups stored all their fabric at her house and came there to work on their quilts. The Fiber Arts room is a completely different and welcome experience for her.[129]

While the Lyndon House Arts Center provides excellent facilities, the guild fears they may soon outgrow them. Mrs. Shepard thinks they would need to find a larger space for the monthly meetings if the guild gained a significant number of new members.[130] In the Fiber Arts room, there are sewing machines, tables to cut and lay out fabric, and fabric storage. Many people go to the charity bee's gathering, and they often work and move around each other. Even so, Mrs. Bauer feels that the Wednesday gatherings are a warm and welcoming environment with people working on projects and talking together. Everyone can work on their own task or help one another with bigger projects.[131] The charity bee's meetings are very different compared to the monthly guild meetings.

The Cotton Patch Quilters meet every second Tuesday of the month in the evening, and these monthly meetings usually have a set agenda. A typical Cotton Patch Quilters guild meeting begins with half an hour of social time at the Lyndon House Arts Center. Members sign in, bring snacks to share, buy raffle tickets, pay dues, check out books from the guild's library, sign up for show and tell, and talk amongst each other. As the current president, Mrs. Shepherd explained that the guild's meetings can be quite chaotic for her. She needs to make sure they are following the agenda and each item is on time as the meetings are supposed to be over by nine. She is ready to be a "regular member" again as the majority of the guild really enjoy the monthly meetings. They

[129] Susan Brassard, Athens, Georgia, October 16, 2019.
[130] Sheila Shepherd, Athens, Georgia, October 24, 2019.
[131] Vicki Bauer, Athens, Georgia, October 23, 2019.

socialize and talk to each other about their current projects and what is next for them.[132] Mrs. Nelson noted that there is "lots of talk back and forth. Lots of swapping of ideas. If somebody doesn't know how to do something, there's always somebody in the group that knows how to do it or knows how to do it better; so, there's a lot of exchange of information and ideas."[133] After the social time, the president begins the official meeting by welcoming everyone. She informs the members of current activities and finances, dates of future workshops, retreats, and other quilting activities in the area. If the guild's officers and committees have information to share, they give reports.

The Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild has a defined organization. There is a board of officers, which is composed of a president, president elect, vice president of membership, vice president of member education, secretary, and treasurer. The officers are elected for year-long terms that end in July. The guild's fiscal year runs from July to June. Underneath the officers, there are committees to coordinate the guild's various activities. The committees include Challenges, Community Service, Door Prizes, Fundraising, Internet/Web Site, Library, Newsletter, Show & Tell, and Sunshine.[134] The officers are in charge of running the business part of the guild. Currently, the Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild has 501(c)(3) Non-Profit status, and they need to keep orderly records.[135] The committees plan activities and the different parts of the meetings for the guild's members. For instance, Mrs. Lawrence explained how the meeting raffles work. There are usually three prizes, and members buy tickets before the meetings starts. The money goes towards the guild's finances. The baskets usually contain fabric patterns,

[132] Sheila Shepherd, Athens, Georgia, October 24, 2019.
[133] Ellen Nelson, Athens, Georgia, October 9, 2019.
[134] Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild, "Cotton Patch Dispatch," December 2019, 1.
[135] Sheila Shepherd, Athens, Georgia, October 24, 2019.

fabric, scissors, and other sewing notions. Sometimes there will be a covered mystery basket. She finds the raffle and seeing who will win fun.[136] In addition to the raffle, there is always a program at the Cotton Patch Quilters' monthly meetings.

A program is any presentation given to the guild about a certain quilting pattern or technique or other related topic. Typically, guild members, crafting professionals, other guilds, and national or international quilters give programs for the Cotton Patch Quilters. For instance, in October 2019 a historical reenactor gave a presentation as Eliza Pinckney. Pinckney was an eighteenth century woman who ran the first plantation that made indigo a cash crop. The reenactor explained how the enslaved people on the plantation worked with indigo to dye textiles. She also described how she sewed her eighteenth century dress to the guild.[137] In the past, a member of the Cotton Patch Quilters gave a program that taught the members how to photograph and catalog their quilts for a historical record.[138] Other past programs included preparing for their biennial quilt show.[139] In 2005, the chairman of the Georgia Quilt Museum Committee of the Georgia Quilt Council presented a program to the guild members.[140] Programs are one of the main activities, and the president explained how most of the guild's profits go towards either bringing in speakers for the programs or for the charity bee's activities.[141] When the guild hires speakers, they often teach workshops as well.

[136] Personal Observation, Athens, Georgia, October 8, 2019; Sue Lawrence, Athens, Georgia, September 22, 2019.
[137] Personal Observation, Athens, Georgia, October 8, 2019.
[138] Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild, "History: 2000-2005," https://www.cpquilters.org/history-2000-2005/ (accessed December 17, 2019).
[139] Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild, "History: 1990-1995."
[140] Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild, "History: 2005-2009," https://www.cpquilters.org/history-2005-2009/ (accessed December 17, 2019).
[141] Sheila Shepherd, Athens, Georgia, October 24, 2019.

Programs occur during the guild's monthly meetings or as field trips, but workshops will typically happen the next day. There is not enough time during the meeting for a speaker to give their lecture as well as the workshop; so, the workshops often come after the program. For instance, Margaret Rolfe from Australia gave a lecture based on her book in 1993 and taught a workshop for the members as well.[142] Between 2003 and 2004, Kay Hewett and Billie Lauder taught programs and workshops at the guild, and members of other guilds led programs for the Cotton Patch Quilters as well.[143] Other people may only teach workshops. The guild has hosted Dilys Fronks and British quilter Barbara Barber who each taught two workshops for the Cotton Patch Quilters. In 2005, Scarlett Rose gave a workshop on Celtic quilt designs.[144] Over the years, many different people and members have led workshops and programs that demonstrate different techniques, patterns, and quilts for the Cotton Patch Quilters.

After the program at the guild's monthly meeting, the members who signed up for show and tell prepare to share their projects with the guild. For most members, show and tell is one of their favorite parts of being in a guild. During show and tell, members will hold up the quilt they made—with the help of another member if needed—to display it to the rest of the guild. They may explain their design choices, reasoning for making the quilt, and/or stories about the quilt. Show and tell is not only a way for the members to show off the project they have been working on and all the time they spent but also their thinking and reasoning for the design and the choices they made. Members like seeing how others will interpret a specific quilt pattern or design. They will get fresh ideas and

[142] Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild, "History: 1990-1995."
[143] Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild, "History: 2000-2005."
[144] Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild, "History: 2000-2005."

inspiration from their fellow guild members' quilts and projects. Only at the first or second guild meeting Mrs. Lawrence attended, one of the Cotton Patch Quilters, Sylvia Schaefer gave a program based on her modern quilting book. She also showed a quilt to the guild. Mrs. Lawrence thought the quilt was very beautiful, and she bought the book after the meeting. She has since made her own interpretation of the quilt. During show and tell, the members may also credit those who helped them with the quilt or taught them techniques that went into the quilt. The members will take photos of the quilts, and they will laugh along with the stories. Often, they will also clap when the quilt is first displayed. The Cotton Patch Quilters are very supportive of each other's efforts. Therefore, show and tell is one of the most important parts of the meeting for guild members.

Other events that might occur during the guild meetings include preparing for the quilt show. The Cotton Patch Quilters have a quilt show every other year at the Oconee County Civic Center. While the guild organizes the quilt show themselves, there is a separate quilt show president and group within the Cotton Patch Quilters who take on the majority of the planning. When Mrs. Shepherd steps down as president of the guild, she looks forward to having a larger role in planning their quilt show. Quilt shows provide a number of activities for the Cotton Patch Quilters. They serve as a fundraiser for the guild. The public buys tickets to enter the quilt show, and they also organize vendors. They often also raffle off a quilt as a fundraiser for the guild or the charity bee. Moreover, the Cotton Patch Quilters host their own boutique where members make items to sell, and the guild makes fifteen percent of the profits from the boutique. The majority goes to the member who made the item. Mrs. Shepherd explains that the show promotes

quilting within the community. The guild has increased their advertising over the years to bring more of the community to their quilt shows.[145] Additionally, anyone who wishes to participate in the quilt show must be a member of the Cotton Patch Quilters. While their membership does inflate with more or less inactive members during show years, the quilt show is important to the Cotton Patch Quilters. Mrs. Lawrence once made a quilt for her brother-in-law and his wife for Christmas, but she asked them to temporarily bring it back so she could enter it into the quilt show. Due to timing, she ended up having the quilt for the next year. She earned a ribbon of recognition for that quilt, and she was pleased to share it with her brother-in-law when she returned the quilt.[146] The Cotton Patch Quilters quilt show is important for guild members to have their work shown, judged, and acknowledged for their time and skill that went into their quilts.

The guild held the first quilt show in 1987 at the Tuckston United Methodist Church in Athens, Georgia. The first show was one day and included classes for participants. The guild's second quilt show in 1989 was also one day but held at the State Botanical Gardens of Georgia.[147] In 1991, the guild held their quilt show at the Ware-Lyndon house for two weeks. Members could have their quilts displayed, judged, and compete for awards. In 1995, the guild held their quilt show at the Oconee County Civic Center for the first time. This show included the quilts members made for the Olympic Quilt Project where quilts made by Georgian quilters were given to countries' flagbearers in the final ceremony.[148] By their sixth show in 2005, over 175 quilts were shown, judged, and given awards. Members can show any quilt they want in the different

[145] Sheila Shepherd, Athens, Georgia, October 24, 2019.
[146] Sue Lawrence, Athens, Georgia, September 22, 2019.
[147] Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild, "History: 1980's."
[148] Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild, "History: 1990-1995."

categories, but there is also a category for the guild's challenge quilts members made in the last year or two.

The Cotton Patch Quilters give their members challenges in order to instigate design inspiration for their quilts. They have two challenges a year. They may regulate the size, pattern, color, and such, and the guild sets a due date for the finished quilts. At the guild's meetings everyone who participated in the challenge will show their quilts. The members will vote, and the quilt with the most votes will receive a small prize like a fat quarter bundle, which is a selection of fabrics that are a quarter of a yard long. The challenge quilts can then be shown at quilt shows as well. Judges will examine them and may award ribbons and prizes. Mrs. Shepherd had two quilts that were the result of challenges, and she entered them in multiple quilt shows. She made "S Spiral" from a challenge that had to be a certain size and include text, three different fabrics, and

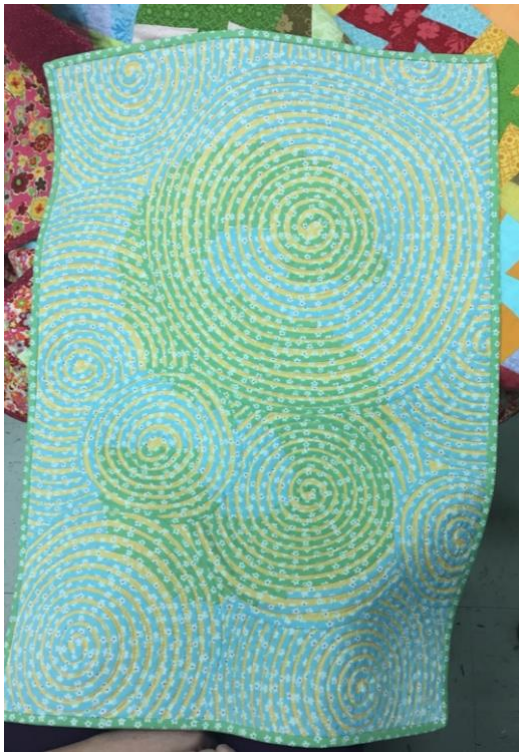

Figure 8. Sheila Shepherd, "S Spiral" (Photo taken by the author and used with the permission of Sheila Shepherd)

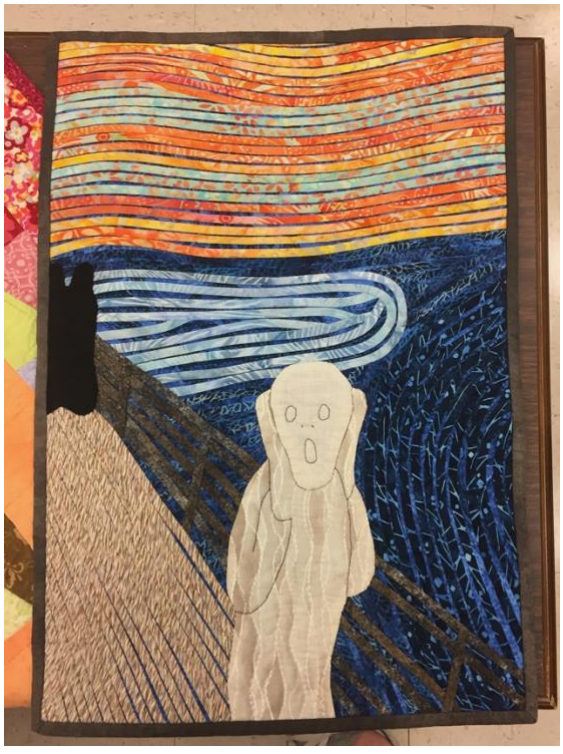

Figure 8. Sheila Shepherd, "My Scream" (Photo taken by the author and used with the permission of Sheila Shepherd)

flowers. This quilt won three ribbons at quilt shows. She made one of her other quilts called “My Scream” for a challenge where the quilts had to be based on a piece of art. She chose Edvard Munch’s *The Scream*, because it is no longer under copyright law, and she may want to sell it in the future. This quilt has also earned her ribbons at quilt shows.[149] The Cotton Patch Quilters’ most recent challenge was to make a quilt with a silhouette.[150] Therefore, challenges demonstrate how members can approach a concept in many different ways, and they help inspire guild members for their quilt projects.

Another way guild members find time to work on their quilt projects and garner help and inspiration from each other is retreats. The Cotton Patch Quilters’ first retreat was in 1990 and held at Rock Eagle in Eatonton, Georgia.[151] The guild now has two retreats a year. They are typically hosted at the FFA, FCCLA retreat center in Covington, Georgia. The guild members spend four days together just sewing and spending time with each other. For Mrs. Lawrence, retreats were how she was able to get to know other members of the guild. She signed up for a retreat as soon as she joined the Cotton Patch Quilters. She “had four days of immersion of getting to know everybody on a personal level, getting to know twenty people on a personal level…it's fantastic in that respect. So, you bring projects. People will critique your projects. You can listen. They'll give you ideas. You can take them, do whatever, but everybody's kind of working together, and it's a lot of fun.”[152] Mrs. Lawrence really enjoyed the guild’s retreats, and she has been on others since then as well. Only a small group attend a retreat at one time, but the members that are able to go enjoy having several days to only sew and talk to each other.

[149] Sheila Shepherd, Athens, Georgia, October 24, 2019.
[150] Sue Lawrence, Athens, Georgia, September 22, 2019.
[151] Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild, “History: 1990-1995.”
[152] Sue Lawrence, Athens, Georgia, September 22, 2019.

Bees are another aspect of the guild that lets members socialize and quilt together. Bees are smaller groups within the guild that often focus on a particular activity, style, or interest. The Cotton Patch Quilters first began to organize bees in 1993.[153] In 2000, there were nine bees within the larger guild.[154] Today, there are three bees: Charity Bee, Stitch and Bitch, and Monday Madness.[155] The charity bee is run by the community service committee. Mrs. Nelson also mentioned other groups within the guild that focus on different quilting techniques. There is a modern quilting group, an applique group, and a Baltimore album quilt group.[156] There used to be a handwork bee, but they stopped meeting in August of 2019.[157] Mrs. Shepherd explained that there was not enough interest for the bee to continue. She would have loved to go to their meetings since she prefers hand quilting, but they met during the day while she was working.

Guild members feel that they want more interaction with each other and opportunities to learn than the monthly guild meeting provides. Much of the guild meeting is focused on business and upcoming activities. Bees allow members to choose a quilting activity that interests them, and they are often the avenue for members to have more "togetherness." Mrs. Nelson explained that the shared interest of those in the charity bee is "giving quilts that we make to comfort people who need comforting one way or another."[158] Mrs. Shepherd believes she grows more within bees. The Cotton Patch Quilters used to have the night owl bee for members who worked. They met once a month at someone's house, brought food, and sat and talked while working on their

[153] Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild, "History: 1990-1995."
[154] Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild, "History: 2000-2005."
[155] Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild, "Cotton Patch Dispatch," December 2019, 5.
[156] Ellen Nelson, Athens, Georgia, October 9, 2019.
[157] Sheila Shepherd, Athens, Georgia, October 24, 2019.
[158] Ellen Nelson, Athens, Georgia, October 9, 2019.

projects. According to Mrs. Shepherd "it doesn't get much better than that!"[159] While they worked, the women talked about their families, lives, jobs, and quilting, and they became friends in the process. Unfortunately, the woman who hosted the meetings sold her house. Mrs. Shepherd would have taken over the meetings, but she was also in the process of selling her house and moving farther away.[160] She hopes the night owl bee will start again in the future. Mrs. Nelson explained how another bee stopped meeting because the member who hosted the meeting had to take care of her husband when he moved into a nursing home.[161] While unfortunately bees often stop meeting due to members' other commitments and family matters, the charity bee and community service committee are one of the strongest elements of the Cotton Patch Quilters.

Figure 9. Charity bee meeting (Photo courtesy of Vicki Bauer)

[159] Sheila Shepherd, Athens, Georgia, October 24, 2019.
[160] Sheila Shepherd, Athens, Georgia, October 24, 2019.
[161] Ellen Nelson, Athens, Georgia, October 9, 2019.

Charity and community service represent a large amount of the Cotton Patch Quilters' work and member efforts. When Mrs. Nelson first became involved in the charity bee, all guild members were asked to make one or two quilts for charity every year, and the bee would send the quilts to Project Safe. This organization helps mothers and children in vulnerable situations. Mrs. Nelson realized they were not giving as many quilts as they should to Project Safe. She was one of the members who suggested they start meeting at the new Lyndon House Arts Center every Wednesday morning. As a result, they were more productive and could offer more to charity. When they first started, they would make quilts that would be raffled off. The resulting funds would be given to charity. The charity bee has now transferred to a model where they only give quilts instead of money to charitable organizations as their talents lie in quilting. Since Mrs. Nelson started participating in the charity bee, their work has grown by "leaps and bounds." The guild has been sending enough quilts for every child at Project Safe.

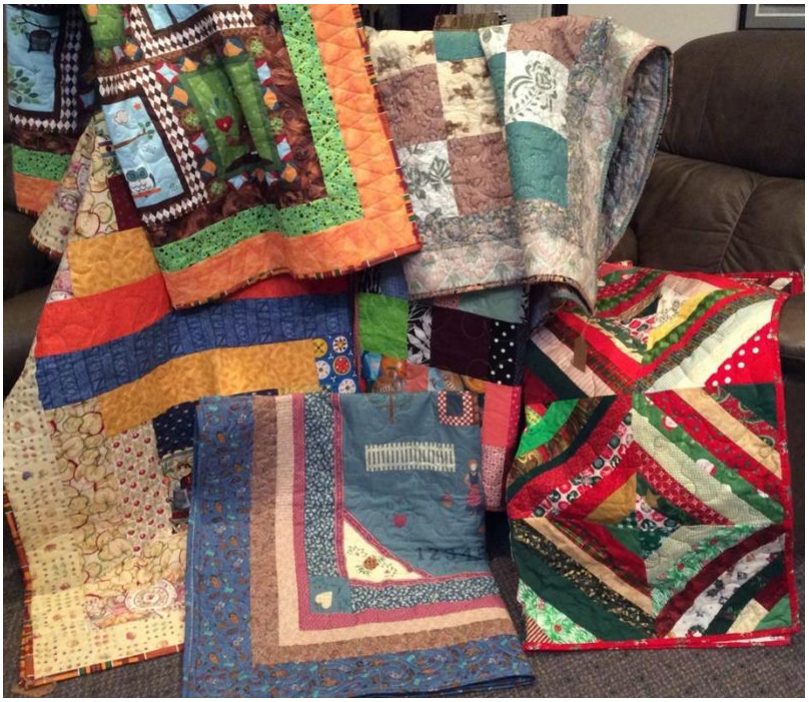

Figure 10. Quilts made by the charity bee for donation (Photo courtesy of Vicki Bauer)

Additionally, they send quilts and blankets to Prevent Child Abuse, the neonatal and pediatric units at the local hospitals, the Lauren Smith Cancer Center, a hospice center, a women's shelter, Habitat for Humanity, a homeless shelter called Bigger Vision, the Athens Council on Aging's senior center, and Quilts of Valor, which provides quilts for U.S. veterans. Organizations may also request a quilt that they will then raffle as a fundraiser.[162] Due to the charity bee's increased production, the Cotton Patch Quilters are well-known in the Athens area for their community service. The chairs of the charity bee keep track of the quilts they donate during the year and their total value using a formula. This equation uses the size of the quilt to calculate the worth of the materials and their time. This is useful for the guild to keep track of the charity bee's production and compare year to year.[163] Their production has grown exponentially over the years, and

Figure 11. Quilts made by the charity bee for donation displayed in the Lyndon House Arts Center (Photo courtesy of Vicki Bauer)

[162] Ellen Nelson, Athens, Georgia, October 9, 2019; Sue Lawrence, Athens, Georgia, September 22, 2019; Vicki Bauer, Athens, Georgia, October 23, 2019.
[163] Ellen Nelson, Athens, Georgia, October 9, 2019.

the guild as a whole enjoys participating and contributing to the charity bee and their community.

Many guild members currently participate in the charity bee. Both members and those outside the guild donate fabric to the bee for their use. Moreover, the charity bee will raise money with other events. For instance, they recently participated in a flea market event at a local restaurant, Big City Bread. They sold quilts to raise money for more materials and new sewing machines to continue their efforts. They have had similar events at the new Joann's opening in Athens and the Lickskillet Fall Festival.[164] Even the members who cannot go to the charity bee's weekly meetings try to participate in the guild's community service activities. Since Mrs. Shepherd works, she cannot go to the charity bee, but she knows that it is really important for the guild to do charity work. She

Figure 12. Charity bee meeting (Photo courtesy of Vicki Bauer)

[164] Ellen Nelson, Athens, Georgia, October 9, 2019; Sue Lawrence, Athens, Georgia, September 22, 2019; Susan Brassard, Athens, Georgia, October 16, 2019.

feels that she grows personally by making quilts for them. Her way of giving back to her community is quilting for people through the guild. The quilts give comfort to those who need it.[165] Mrs. Brassard believes that the charity bee is valuable to the guild and those that participate in it. They are, "producing something that is a benefit to the community, and as far as being in the guild…the benefits being that you're meeting people and you learn new things in terms of your quilting and you can kind of up your game in terms of what you're doing."[166] From Mrs. Bauer's perspective, "it's a wonderful thing for people to know that there are ladies out there—and there could be men if they want to join us—that are, that are putting together things that'll keep people warm and comforted and maybe bring some joy to their life."[167] The charity bee is an integral part of the Cotton

Figure 13. Charity bee meeting (Photo courtesy of Vicki Bauer)

[165] Sheila Shepherd, Athens, Georgia, October 24, 2019.
[166] Susan Brassard, Athens, Georgia, October 16, 2019.
[167] Vicki Bauer, Athens, Georgia, October 23, 2019.

Patch Quilters, and all the members value their work and try to contribute to their activities.

At charity bee meetings the women are not only working for their community, but they are also spending time with each other and having fun. Mrs. Lawrence goes to the meetings almost every week, and she really enjoys them:

> "The impact is really huge, when I saw how many [quilts] were being made, and at the bee it's really kind of a fun, because there'll be people who are sorting and cutting and the way people who are sewing on bindings and people who are finding backings for quilts and trimming, and it's kind of a hodgepodge sometimes. Lots of people, sometimes fewer, and everyone working together to make an impact in the community too. So, there's a social element to it as well. I tend to be a little bit of a quieter person; so, I'm more of a listener, but there's always some funny story to hear and share."[168]

In the Fiber Arts room, there is every element of quilting happening. Someone is sorting the donated fabric. There is a table where women are cutting the fabric into pieces. Members sit at tables piecing the quilt tops together or sewing the bindings. Those with long arm machines will take the quilt tops home to have them machine quilted. They also sew dog beds stuffed with any fabric scraps to give away as well. Mrs. Bauer affectionately compares the charity bee meetings to a "three ring circus."[169] New guild members often come to the charity bee to meet people and learn more about quilting since they are so productive. Furthermore, non-members will also come to the charity bee

[168] Sue Lawrence, Athens, Georgia, September 22, 2019.
[169] Vicki Bauer, Athens, Georgia, October 23, 2019.

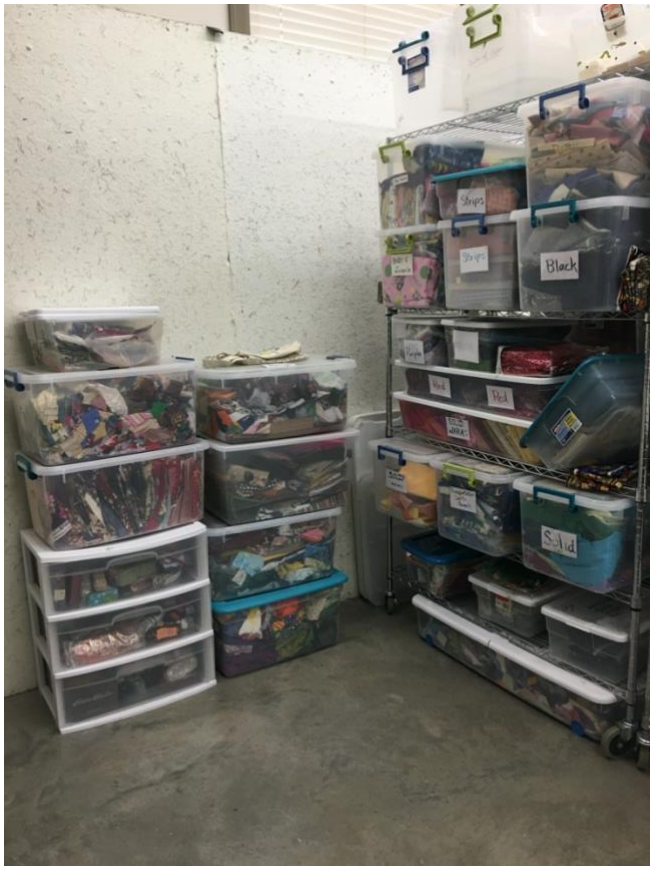

Figure 14. Donated fabric in the Fiber Arts Room (Photo courtesy of Vicki Bauer)

to learn about quilting and sewing or to help with their work.[170] For the Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild, the charity bee is a very important cog in their machine.

While most of the Cotton Patch Quilters' members are women, there have been several male members throughout its history. In 2002, Ray Barraras gave a program called "Man's View of Quilting." He also spoke about the Quilt Ladies of the Dominican Republic. The guild collected quilting items for him to take to women in the Dominican Republic.[171] Today, there is at least one male member of the guild. Mrs. Bauer invited Charles Nicolosi to the guild. She worked in the University of Georgia's chemistry department as an administrative assistant, and he is an IT person for the department. His grandmother was a quilter, and after talking to Mrs. Bauer and her friend from the guild, he is now an active member of the Cotton Patch Quilters and a prolific quilter. He also helps maintain the guild's website. Mrs. Bauer is very excited at how much his quilting has improved since joining the guild.[172] Even though the ratio of

[170] Sue Lawrence, Athens, Georgia, September 22, 2019; Susan Brassard, Athens, Georgia, October 16, 2019.
[171] Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild, "History: 2000-2005."
[172] Vicki Bauer, Athens, Georgia, October 23, 2019.

women to men involved in quilting guilds is extremely skewed, some of the most famous quilters are males such as Kaffe Fasscett and Ricky Tims as noted by Mrs. Nelson and Mrs. Brassard.[173] When prompted, the women from the Cotton Patch Quilters noticed similar patterns and reasons for why there are so few men involved in quilting guilds.

All the women stated that men typically do not join quilting guilds because it is stereotyped and interpreted as a woman's group, art, and activity. Mrs. Brassard added that the stigma of masculinity keeps men from participating in quilting guilds. Despite this, all the women would enjoy having more men join the Cotton Patch Quilters, because they bring fresh, unique, and diverse ideas and perspectives to quilting. According to Mrs. Bauer, men in the guild "brings our group to a new level of communicating…we aren't just a bunch of women sitting around maybe talking about things…it just brings the conversation to a higher level." She thinks men may be embarrassed to join a quilting guild since it is usually thought of as a woman's group, and she wishes more would join the Cotton Patch Quilters. In Mrs. Shepherd's experience, her father quilted and enjoyed spending that time with her mother. Therefore, while men seldom join the Cotton Patch Quilters, those that are there are welcomed by the other members.

Even though men are welcome in the Cotton Patch Quilters, the group is dominantly populated by women. Quilting is still a gendered activity that women greatly enjoy. The guild's history and activities demonstrate how it is a part of women intangible cultural heritage and its transmission. The members show off their projects to one another, share stories, tips, and techniques, and teach those who do not know how to quilt. They share their knowledge with the community as well as donate many quilts through the charity

[173] Ellen Nelson, Athens, Georgia, October 9, 2019.

bee. At the same time, they are building a community of women who share the same passion for quilting. The guild allows these women to practice and pass on their intangible cultural heritage.

The Guild's Purpose, Meaning, and Future

The Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild is an important component of each of the interviewees' lives and means much to them. Each of the women stated the purpose they believe the guild serves for them and quilting as a whole. For them the intention of the guild is very similar. Additionally, while they have not noticed any changes in the guild since they joined, they do have hopes and ideas for the Cotton Patch Quilters' future. Together, the interviewees provided a picture for the exact role the guild plays in their individual lives. At the same time, they explain how the guild contributes to women's intangible cultural heritage.

As a whole, the women mentioned similar purposes for the guild, but their individual answers are their own. Mrs. Bauer states that the guild gathers quilters together, and it is important to have a quilt show every two years. The show makes the guild known to Athens and Georgia as a whole, and the guild can grow their membership that way. She hopes to have more organization and room for the charity bee to grow, but that is a hard task with how busy they are and how many people are involved. They are slowly figuring out a system that works for them.[174] For Mrs. Lawrence, the guild serves two purposes. The Cotton Patch Quilters help others learn about quilting and how to quilt, and in the process, they keep the "art of quilting alive and thriving." The second purpose is to be part of a community that helps others. She would like to be able to recruit more younger

[174] Vicki Bauer, Athens, Georgia, October 23, 2019.

people to the guild in order to sustain the organization's future; however, she understands how difficult it is to keep up with life, family, and a job.[175] Mrs. Brassard made similar statements. The guild helps members' quilting education and inspiration by grouping women together with a shared interested. For her, the Cotton Patch Quilters creates a community. Mrs. Brassard believes the guild is doing really great with their quilt shows, meetings, and community service. She would also like to see more young people involved in the guild. She thinks young people are interested in sewing and quilting, but their lives are usually too busy to get involved.[176] Both Mrs. Nelson and Mrs. Shepherd have comparable sentiments about the guild and its future as well. The guild helps educate them about quilting, improve their craft, and inform the community about quilting as well as serves the community. Mrs. Nelson's hope for the guild is its continuance. Mrs. Shepherd would like to have more nationally known quilters lead programs. Additionally, she would like to have the guild engage with young girls and women about quilting as well.[177] While these women are very happy with their experience in the guild, they do have hopes and ideas for how they can grow in the future.

For the women that were interviewed, their participation in the Cotton Patch Quilters is an important part of their lives. Mrs. Lawrence feels that she can relax and enjoy herself when at guild and bee meetings. She gets a sense of accomplishment from participating in the guild and bee, and she really enjoys giving back to the community and learning from the other members about sewing and their lives.[178] Mrs. Brassard also

[175] Sue Lawrence, Athens, Georgia, September 22, 2019.
[176] Susan Brassard, Athens, Georgia, October 16, 2019.
[177] Ellen Nelson, Athens, Georgia, October 9, 2019; Sheila Shepherd, Athens, Georgia, October 24, 2019.
[178] Sue Lawrence, Athens, Georgia, September 22, 2019.

keeps coming back to the guild and bee meetings, because she wants to continue working and giving back to the community. She sees the value of the guild for both her and other members as a community in terms of service as well as the forming of a network of people who can help each other and improve their skills. Both Mrs. Brassard and Mrs. Bauer feel really helpful at meetings and enjoy the friendship that comes with being part of a community.[179] Even though everyone is welcome at the charity bee, Mrs. Bauer continues to be a member of the guild, because she wants to participate in the quilt show and continue learning.[180] Mrs. Nelson feels that she is making an impact on individuals and the community by participating in the Cotton Patch Quilters and the charity bee.[181] For Mrs. Shepherd, the charity work is very important, but she also mentions how the women serve as a resource of knowledge and help with each other. The guild helps them connect and form relationships with other members as well as non-members. While the education and learning component of the guild is available from other resources, Mrs. Shepherd feels that the guild offers more variety and the ability to have equal relationships with other members based on their shared interest.[182] Thus, the Cotton Patch Quilters is an integral part of their lives, because the guild contributes to many aspects that are important to each of them as well as their intangible cultural heritage.

The Cotton Patch Quilters Quilt Guild provides an avenue for the women involved to educate themselves about quilting, give to charity, and form a community of women who have a shared interest and help each other continue quilting. In the process, they share and transmit the knowledge they have of quilting and crafting while also furthering their

[179] Susan Brassard, Athens, Georgia, October 16, 2019; Vicki Bauer, Athens, Georgia, October 23, 2019.
[180] Vicki Bauer, Athens, Georgia, October 23, 2019.
[181] Ellen Nelson, Athens, Georgia, October 9, 2019.
[182] Sheila Shepherd, Athens, Georgia, October 24, 2019.

own education. The guild allows them to keep the practice of quilting alive and thriving through their activities and participation in the guild. As a result, the women greatly value the guild and its role in their lives and the community as a whole. Additionally, The Cotton Patch Quilters is a hub of both information and women who continue their intangible cultural heritage to the benefit of the community and anyone else interested in joining the guild in the future.

CHAPTER 3: THE BROWN SUGAR STITCHERS QUILT GUILD

Interviewee Profiles

When I attended the October 2019 meeting for the Brown Sugar Stitchers Quilt Guild, two people approached me. They were willing to talk to me about their experience with sewing, quilting, and guilds. In addition, I gathered the contact information of five others to interview. Each of these people answered questions about their experiences in the guild, their personal history with sewing and quilting, and the Brown Sugar Stitchers' history. These women represent about ten percent of the Brown Sugar Stitchers Quilt Guild, and their point of views lend insight into how women's participation in crafting groups like quilting guilds play a role in the American woman's intangible cultural heritage.

One of the interviewees is Nancy DeCreny Franklin. She is also one of the founding members of the Brown Sugar Stitchers Quilt Guild. Mrs. Franklin first learned to sew when her mother taught her and her two sisters. Even in her teenage years and twenties, Mrs. Franklin was drawn to quilts. She was interested in making quilts, but no one in her family had experience with them. Only when she was forty did she decide to introduce "something new" into her life. She began taking quilting classes at a local fabric store. At one of these classes, Mrs. Franklin met Jocelyn Carter who was also new to quilting. When they later connected again online, they decided to start meeting to discuss and quilt together. Ms. Carter was the first to introduce quilting guilds and the idea of starting a guild to Mrs. Franklin. They both wanted to meet other African

American women interested in quilting. The women approached a librarian, Doris Wells, at their local Dekalb county library, the Wesley Chapel-William C. Brown library, to organize a room they could meet in and quilt. Ms. Wells introduced the two women to another quilter who visited the library, Michelle Willis. The three women began meeting in late 1999, but they held their first official meeting in January 2000. They started going to quilt shows and shops together, and anytime they saw other African American quilters they invited them to their group. They quickly garnered other women to join the Brown Sugar Stitchers.

Since learning to quilt and helping found the Brown Sugar Stitchers, Mrs. Franklin's quilting skills and community has only grown. At one point she participated in a quilting bee that originally began with other Brown Sugar Stitchers; however, other

Figure 15. Nancy DeCreny Franklin during show and tell (Photo taken by the author and used with the permission of Nancy DeCreny Franklin)

women they knew joined over time or they dropped out of the guild but continued to stay part of the bee. Mrs. Franklin also used to teach quilting at a senior center. When she left, another Brown Sugar Stitchers member took the position. Mrs. Franklin has taught quilting at a Joann's store as well. Moreover, she is currently learning how to become a quilt appraiser. At the moment, she is also the Brown Sugar Stitchers treasurer. Over the last twenty years, Mrs. Franklin has greatly developed her quilting and crafting skills, and the Brown Sugar Stitchers would not exist without her.[183]

One of the original members, Elisa Woods, is the current president of the Brown Sugar Stitchers Quilt Guild. She has been involved in the guild since its inception in 2000. She met Mrs. Franklin and Ms. Carter in the parking lot of a quilt show. They told her about the guild and the quilters and knitters show Ms. Wells, the librarian, was organizing. Ms. Wells asked the Brown Sugar Stitchers to be involved, but they had not yet organized a quilt show. Ms. Woods had just moved from Colorado where she had been part of two quilt guilds and knew exactly how to organize a show. She had already met some other quilters in Georgia and invited them to help her with the Brown Sugar Stitchers quilt show. Ever since, Ms. Woods has been involved with the Brown Sugar Stitchers. She has also joined three other quilt guilds: The Atlanta Modern Quilt Guild, The West Atlanta Modern Quilt Guild, and The Greater Atlanta Modern Quilt Guild.

Ms. Woods' journey with quilting began when her mother taught her how to sew. Her mother sewed for practicality. Together they made skirts, blouses, and her homecoming and prom jackets. While Ms. Woods' mother did not quilt, her grandmother did. When Ms. Woods was a child, they always slept under a heavy quilt made from

[183] Nancy DeCreny Franklin, November 15, 2019.

clothing that her grandma quilted on a frame. After taking the quilt with her to college and washing it countless times, there "wasn't much left." She decided to learn how to quilt so she could reproduce her grandma's quilt. The Chicago Cultural Center offered a quilting workshop, and Ms. Woods attended the event as her first learning experience with quilting. Once she moved to Colorado, Ms. Woods joined the Rocky Mountain Wa Shonaji Quilt Guild and the Colorado Quilt Council. She was active in these guilds for eight years before moving to Georgia and joining the Brown Sugar Stitchers Quilt Guild. Since participating in the guild, Ms. Woods has grown close with its members and consistently meets fellow quilters in fabric stores and the like. She always keeps them in mind and sends them crafting and quilting techniques, patterns, or other information if she knows they have a particular interest.[184]

Figure 16. Elisa Woods on bottom left at a guild event (Brown Sugar Stitchers Quilt Guild, https://www.facebook.com/BrownSugarStitchers/)

[184] Elisa Woods, Decatur, Georgia, October 19, 2019.

Figure 17. Peggy Martin with her quilt "African Royalty" (Photo courtesy of Peggy Martin)

Peggy Martin is another member of the Brown Sugar Stitchers who joined two years after the founding members started the guild. Her grandmother was an “avid sewer.” Although, she did not quilt. Ms. Martin grew up hearing stories about how her grandmother would make dress patterns out of newspaper. Later, Ms. Martin taught herself how to sew by reading books, taking classes, watching sewing and quilting shows on television, and watching videos online. She first started by making clothing, but after seeing a quilt show in Beaufort, South Carolina, she decided to learn how to quilt. At a quilt show in Atlanta’s Piedmont Park, she met the woman who organized the show. By meeting different quilters and people and asking around, she found the Brown Sugar Stitchers’ annual quilt show. Afterwards, she joined the guild. Since then, Ms. Martin has continued to take classes at different quilt shops. She also joined the East Cobb Quilting Guild as well as a group of quilters she informally gathers with once a month at the Scarlet Thread quilt shop. Likewise, Ms. Martin attends other events such as a holiday party with both Brown Sugar Stitchers members and non-members that is separate from the guild’s

activities. These groups and events continue to complement and expand her interest in quilting.[185]

Another member of the Brown Sugar Stitchers who wished to remain anonymous joined the guild in 2004. They have sewed all their life and started working professionally in fashion and costume design. At one time, they taught an African American fashion design course at the University of Maryland. Moreover, they have taught sewing classes at Sears. When they moved to Atlanta, they had quite a bit of fabric that they sewed into placemats, pillows, and dolls that they would sell. When they were in a fabric store, they started talking to a woman about how much fabric they still had after moving from New York. She invited them to join the Brown Sugar Stitchers and

Figure 18. Peggy Martin, "I Got My Sister with Me" (Photo courtesy of Peggy Martin)

[185] Peggy Martin, November 1, 2019.

learn how to quilt. So, they taught themselves how to quilt, which came naturally as "being an artist, you know how to do a lot of different things." The Brown Sugar Stitchers is the only guild and crafting group they have joined, but they have really enjoyed meeting and becoming friends with the other members and learning to quilt. Since then, they have also incorporated quilting into their professional art and business.[186]

Vanessa Brown learned to sew when she was five. Her grandmother's sister, her aunt, was recovering from breast cancer. During her aunt's recovery, Mrs. Brown sat with her during the day to keep her company. Her aunt knew how to knit, crochet, and sew. While Mrs. Brown visited with her during the day, her aunt taught her how to sew. The next year, Mrs. Brown received a toy sewing machine for Christmas. She "then went on to always continue consistently creating or sewing or repairs…alterations." For the

Figure 19. Vanessa Brown (Brown Sugar Stitchers Quilt Guild, https://www.facebook.com/BrownSugarStitchers/)

[186] Guild Member, November 14, 2019.

Girl Scouts' sewing badge, she learned hand sewing, because they had to make an apron from start to finish by hand. Mrs. Brown also made fashionable clothes for her Barbies and dolls. Moreover, one of her first jobs was working in a textile plant in North Carolina—along with her other aunt—sewing one part of men's shirts. Mrs. Brown's paternal grandmother also sewed and hand quilted. When the family would visit her, Mrs. Brown remembers her piecing together salvaged fabric into a quilt. As an adult, Mrs. Brown has also learned upholstery and other sewing skills needed for interior decorating.

In 2002, a church member of Mrs. Brown wanted to give her daughter a photographic memory quilt she had seen in a movie for her graduation. She asked Mrs. Brown to make the quilt; however, she had never quilted before. Mrs. Brown made an agreement with the woman that she would learn to how to quilt in order to try to make this gift for her daughter. Mrs. Brown took a class that taught the participants how to make a quilt in a day from a book. Afterwards, she bought other books, tried different quilt patterns, took another course online, and researched how to make photograph transfers to fabric. In the end, Mrs. Brown successfully made the quilt for her church member and learned how to quilt in the process. While Mrs. Brown has done contracted sewing work in the past, both alone and with another woman, the Brown Sugar Stitchers is the only quilting guild she has joined. She joined the guild in 2007, after hearing about the Brown Sugar Stitchers through her husband. He and Elisa Woods went to college together, and they and their group of friends regularly stay in contact. Mrs. Brown's husband told her how Ms. Woods wanted to make a t-shirt quilt from his Peachtree Roadways t-shirts. She realized that joining the Brown Sugar Stitchers would give her "the opportunity for like-minded exchange as well as the other classes." Since then, Mrs.

Brown has continued to quilt and be a consistent member of the Brown Sugar Stitchers, and she is currently the vice president of membership. She has also participated in other quilting events and groups. For instance, one of her fellow members invited her to a regular Christmas event where they are given a quilting challenge, and they must present their interpretation at the holiday brunch. While Mrs. Brown mostly quilts, she still sews, makes interior decoration items, and other crafts for her friends, family, and church.[187]

Gwendolyn Maggitt is another member of the Brown Sugar Stitchers. While she learned to sew in her home economics class, she mostly stopped thereafter in favor of crocheting and some other crafts like macramé. She would sit with her grandmother and watch how she crocheted. Her grandmother was extremely fast, which piqued her interest. She sat with her until she eventually picked it up. Mrs. Maggitt's aunt later taught her how to read crochet patterns. She only started sewing and quilting when she moved to Georgia in 2007. Every woman she met was a quilter, and she thought, "if I was going to have any friends of any kind I better start quilting." One of her friends and church members invited her to the Cotton Boll Quilt Guild, which was the first guild she joined. Mrs. Maggitt joined the Brown Sugar Stitchers in 2009 after attending an event at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta. The guild members had a booth at the event where they told visitors about quilting and had demonstrations. Since then, Mrs. Maggitt has also joined the Early Bird Quilt Guild. She is involved in several crochet groups and an

[187] Vanessa Howell Brown, November 2, 2019.

Figure 20. Gwendolyn Maggitt at a Brown Sugar Stitchers event (Brown Sugar Stitchers Quilt Guild, https://www.facebook.com/BrownSugarStitchers/)

UFO, or Unfinished Objects, group as well. Mrs. Maggitt is now a quilter in addition to a crocheter and is an active member of the Brown Sugar Stitchers.[188]

One of the interviewees is not yet a member of the Brown Sugar Stitchers. Renee Bradley's first experience with the guild was at the October 2019 meeting. She had heard of the Brown Sugar Stitchers and been wanting to visit, and she thinks she may join the guild. Ms. Bradley's friend asked her to come to the meeting, because they had worked on a quilt together, and she was going to show off the quilt during show and tell. She wanted Ms. Bradley to come since she was one of the creators. Ms. Bradley's mother taught her how to sew, and both she and her mother made all their clothes. Even though her mother did not quilt, her grandmother did make utilitarian quilts for her family. Even so, Ms. Bradley had always been interested in quilts. She collected antiques, and one time she bought some quilt tops. She found them very beautiful, and she still wanted to learn how to quilt. So, her friend told her of some quilting classes she

[188] Gwendolyn Maggitt, November 19, 2019.

could take at the community college in St. Louis. When she moved to San Antonio, Texas, Ms. Bradley went to a quilt show with her daughter. One of the guild members there asked her if she could hand quilt. When Ms. Bradley said yes, she sat her down and said, “let me see what you can do. And [Ms. Bradley] did some stitching and she looked at it and she said, well, it ain't bad. After a while, [Ms. Bradley] said I don't know what I'm doing. She said, well, I already know that, that you don't know what you're doing. Everybody laughed…She said, but you will be. She said, stick with me. I'll show you what to do.” The woman invited Ms. Bradley to their guild. Thereafter, Ms. Bradley was in three guilds in Texas for the next sixteen years, including the San Antonio Quilt Guild. Since moving to Georgia, she is part of the Allatoona Quilt Guild and the East Cobb Quilters’ Guild. She is a prolific quilter who has to sew every single day even if only for

Figure 21. Renee Bradley and her quilts (Photo courtesy of Renee Bradley)

a few minutes, and her experience in quilting guilds is very positive. Through them, she has met fellow quilters who are always willing to help teach someone a technique or skill they do not know, go shopping for fabric, drive each other to guild meetings and the like.[189]

These women and members of the Brown Sugar Stitchers are quilters who learned to sew a variety of ways. Mrs. Franklin, Ms. Woods, and Ms. Bradley's mothers all taught them to sew early in life. Likewise, Mrs. Brown's aunt taught her how to sew, and Mrs. Maggitt's grandmother and aunt taught her how to crochet. She later learned to sew in home economics. Only Ms. Woods and Ms. Bradley's grandmothers knew how to quilt, but each of the members and interviewees learned on their own. They either took classes or taught themselves how to quilt using research and their existing sewing and crafting skills. For Mrs. Franklin, Ms. Woods, Ms. Bradley, and Ms. Martin they learned to quilt because they were all fascinated by the quilts they grew up with and had seen at quilt shows and such. Mrs. Brown learned after her church member asked her if she could make a quilt, and Mrs. Maggitt decided to learn after meeting so many other quilters. Another member started quilting as a way to use their extensive fabric collection. There are similarities between all of the interviewees with how they learned to sew and quilt and how they became involved in the Brown Sugar Stitchers. Their relationships with each other, other members, other women, and other quilters and crafters demonstrates a similar approach to their crafting and participation in a guild.

[189] Renee Bradley, November 6, 2019.

Guild Development and Experience

While Brown Sugar Stitchers Quilt Guild's organization and activities are similar to other quilt guilds, the group still has its own specific history and experience for its members. They have participated in varied activities over the years. Likewise, their membership is comprised of women who share comparable quilting and guild experiences that may be exclusive to the Brown Sugar Stitchers. These experiences reveal both how the guild is unique as well as the similarities it and its members share with other guilds, quilters, and women. The members' stories about, and involvement in, the Brown Sugar Stitchers demonstrates how participating in a guild is part of their intangible cultural heritage.

During the creation of any group, the members need to choose a name. For the Brown Sugar Stitchers, Ms. Wells was the first to suggest "Brown," because it not only paid tribute to the library that the guild still meets at today, the Wesley Chapel-William C. Brown library, but also fits because they are "brown people" according to Mrs.

Figure 22. The Brown Sugar Stitchers Quilt Guild logo (Courtesy of Elisa Woods)

Franklin. She stated that it was a perfect suggestion.[190] The rest of the name came from brainstorming. Mrs. Brown thought that at the time they joked that guild members are sweet like sugar.[191] Moreover, many members believe the name sets them apart from other quilt guilds in the Atlanta area as a predominantly African American group.[192] While every quilter is welcome, the majority of the members have and continue to be African American. There have been white members in the past, and Mrs. Franklin had some comments about their involvement. She believes the quilt aesthetic in the Brown Sugar Stitchers is a little different than larger white guilds. She hopes that the women who come to the Brown Sugar Stitchers are appreciative of the art, and those that have joined the Brown Sugar Stitchers were part of the guild for several years at a time. The Brown Sugar Stitchers are open and welcoming to everyone who wants to join the guild.

While most of the members of the Brown Sugar Stitchers are women, men have joined the guild in the past. For Ms. Woods there were many male quilters in the guilds in Colorado, and she remembers at least four male guild members of the Brown Sugar Stitchers. One man had been a sewer in New York before moving to Georgia to stay with his daughter. The members had a nickname for him, and he loved being part of the guild and being around creative women. Even though Ms. Woods enjoys having men in the guild, she notes that men often get more credit in the quilting world. Some of the most famous quilters are men, and while they are still talented, she notes that there are women who are just as skillful quilters that do not get as much recognition or financial backing as the men do. Nonetheless, she feels that the encouragement between men and women

[190] Nancy DeCreny Franklin, November 15, 2019.
[191] Vanessa Howell Brown, November 2, 2019.
[192] Nancy DeCreny Franklin, November 15, 2019.

within the Brown Sugar Stitchers is reciprocal.[193] Other members feel that men bring "a different design and look to the art of quilting" in the guild.[194] Mrs. Franklin likes to see if the men's designs and aesthetics are different than theirs, and they can only add to the group.[195] In Mrs. Brown's experience, some of the best sewers she has known are men. She thinks there has been a separation between men and women's work regarding sewing, and men are not encouraged to sew. When asked why more men are not involved in the guild, Mrs. Maggitt thinks they have their own groups with other men they can join. Even so, they are welcome at the Brown Sugar Stitchers. In Ms. Bradley's experience in Texas, there were many more men involved in those guilds than in the guilds in Georgia. Both Ms. Bradley and Ms. Martin believes there is a stigma attached to quilting, and men would be seen as effeminate or perhaps gay.[196] Nevertheless, she and the other Brown Sugar Stitchers welcome men into the guild. They enjoy seeing their quilts and quilting perspective.

In terms of organization, the Brown Sugar Stitchers have a board of officers as well as committees. Mrs. Franklin was the first president of the guild. Over the years the guild has developed more positions as they grew. In addition to the president there is the vice president of programs, vice president of programs elect, vice president of membership, treasurer, and recording and corresponding secretaries that are currently combined into one position.[197] Ms. Woods is the current president. Mrs. Franklin is treasurer, and Mrs. Brown is vice president of membership. In the past, Ms. Martin has

[193] Elisa Woods, Decatur, Georgia, October 19, 2019.
[194] Guild Member, November 14, 2019.
[195] Nancy DeCreny Franklin, November 15, 2019.
[196] Peggy Martin, November 1, 2019; Renee Bradley, November 6, 2019.
[197] Brown Sugar Stitchers Quilt Guild, "About Us," 2017 https://brownsugarstitchersquiltguild.com/about-us/ (accessed December 17, 2019).

been treasurer and vice president of programs. While officers originally held their positions for one year, the last six years the officer terms are two years long.[198] The guild is in the process of changing their bylaws to have one year terms again.[199] New officers are nominated and voted, and they start their terms when the guild's year ends in July. In addition to the board of officers, the guild has various committees headed by chairpersons that oversee their activities. Committees are in charge of the guild's library, social media, publicity, show and tell, and the Carrie Steele-Pitts donations as well as a committee that oversees the hostess, little treasures, and raffle duties.[200] Additionally, while the Brown Sugar Stitchers do not officially host bees or small groups, many guild members will get together to do activities on their own time like take quilting classes or host events.

Every month, the Brown Sugar Stitchers Quilt Guild meets on the third Saturday. The executive board meets the Sunday before the guild meeting to prepare for the main meeting. They make executive-level decisions and organize the agenda.[201] At the guild meeting, they have various different activities. The members arrive at the library, sign in, and may put their name down for show and tell. Usually, a librarian will welcome the Brown Sugar Stitchers. They really enjoy hosting the guild. The librarian will inform them of the various activities and events the library, and the Dekalb county library system, is having that month. One of the officers typically opens the guild meeting by welcoming and introducing any visitors. They then go over any other business the guild has such as treasury reports, future activities and dates, voting on minutes and other actions, and recognizing members' birthdays. Each officer gives a report of their

198 Vanessa Howell Brown, November 2, 2019.
199 Elisa Woods, Decatur, Georgia, October 19, 2019.
200 Brown Sugar Stitchers Quilt Guild, "About Us."
201 Vanessa Howell Brown, November 2, 2019.

activities. Moreover, throughout the meeting, the treasurer collects funds from members for dues, the Christmas party, the July tea, the raffle, and any other future activities. The yearly dues have been $25 since the guild first started in 2000. During this time, any members who have something to share or announce stand up. Members will often inform the others of an activity or event happening elsewhere that they might be interested in going to with other Brown Sugar Stitchers. A common announcement is inviting other members to a quilting class they are taking or sharing patterns and skills they have learned in quilting classes or other groups.[202]

After the business section of the meeting, they start show and tell. Members who have a finished or almost finished project and want to show their work to the others sign up for show and tell at the beginning of the meeting. Each person is called up and another member helps them hold up the quilt or another project. They often explain their inspiration, design choices, and any other stories they have to the members. For Mrs. Brown, show and tell is a chance to enjoy others' quilts, see what they are doing in terms of quilting, and also get ideas for her own quilts.[203] One member really enjoys the meetings and show and tell, because they get to see friends, meet new people, share new quilting techniques, and see different designs: "It is great looking at these beautiful quilts. We sometimes critique quilts when asked. I just love being with my quilter friends."[204] Show and tell is the highlight of the meeting for Ms. Martin, because she sees the other

[202] Elisa Woods, Decatur, Georgia, October 19, 2019; Gwendolyn Maggitt, November 19, 2019; Personal Observation, Decatur, Georgia, October 19, 2019; Vanessa Howell Brown, November 2, 2019.
[203] Vanessa Howell Brown, November 2, 2019.
[204] Guild Member, November 14, 2019.

members' work and starts getting ideas for her next quilts.[205] Mrs. Franklin also really values the guild meetings and show and tell:

> "It's nice to be able to, to share something that you're interested in and to get the support…and the encouragement of other quilters. Whether they're more experienced than me or better than me…it's nice to have somebody who went off your work. And…it gives me ideas. It gives me motivation to work. You know, when I leave the meeting, I want to come home and I want to, I want to make some more stuff. And so, it's…nice to have that interest outside…of daily life."[206]

Therefore, the guild members greatly value and enjoy the Brown Sugar Stitchers meeting if only for the opportunity to see each other and share their projects. In fact, the officers

Figure 23. Peggy Martin showing the quilt she made for the Carrie Steele-Pitts donation with the help of Gwendolyn Maggitt (Photo taken by the author and used with the permission of Peggy Martin)

[205] Peggy Martin, November 1, 2019.
[206] Nancy DeCreny Franklin, November 15, 2019.

recently surveyed the members about their experience in the Brown Sugar Stitchers. One of their propositions was to shorten or limit show and tell, because they have been quite long in the past, but members refused that idea. One of their main reasons for attending the meetings is show and tell, which demonstrates its importance and value to the Brown Sugar Stitchers. At one point during the meeting, the women will stop to eat lunch and socialize before returning to the rest of the agenda.

After lunch, they have a program that may include a workshop or a speaker. Members who are well versed in a particular area of quilting may give the workshop or others can be brought in to teach a technique, pattern, or other crafting project. Mrs. Brown has taught two classes for the Brown Sugar Stitchers teaching them how to make a clutch wallet and tufted footstools.[207] At the October 2019 meeting, the guild set up several tables for a ruler workshop. Members who had an in-depth understanding of how to use the various rulers or a certain unique ruler set up at the tables. Members wandered from table to table and learned from their peers.[208] Workshops are an avenue for the guild members to further educate themselves and their understanding of quilting as well as share their knowledge with their fellow members.

Another way the guild provides opportunities for members to learn or hear more about quilting is bringing speakers to the meetings. For their twentieth anniversary, the Brown Sugar Stitchers are welcoming Lisa Shepard Stewart to their June 2020

[207] Brown Sugar Stitchers Quilt Guild, "Community," 2017 https://brownsugarstitchersquiltguild.com/community/ (accessed December 17, 2019); Vanessa Howell Brown, November 2, 2019.
[208] Personal Observation, Decatur, Georgia, October 19, 2019.

Figure 24. The Brown Sugar Stitchers twentieth anniversary logo (Courtesy of Elisa Woods)

meeting.[209] She is their first national speaker, and the members are really looking forward to hearing her speak. They are raffling a quilt to be able to bring her to their meeting. In the future, the Brown Sugar Stitchers would like to have more national speakers. If they are not having a program, the members have a sit and sew. They work on projects they have brought with them, assist each other, and share ideas. The Brown Sugar Stitchers' guild meetings start in the morning on Saturday and often last for several hours.[210]

Aside from the guild meetings, one of the Brown Sugar Stitchers' earliest activities included an annual quilt show. The librarian, Ms. Wells, was the first to introduce the idea of a quilt show to the Brown Sugar Stitchers, and Ms. Woods was integral for helping them organize the first show. The members set up all the quilts they decided to show at the library on a Friday night. They opened to the public on Saturday and took everything down directly after the show. Over the years, they held several

[209] Elisa Woods, Decatur, Georgia, October 19, 2019.
[210] Elisa Woods, Decatur, Georgia, October 19, 2019; Personal Observation, Decatur, Georgia, October 19, 2019; Vanessa Howell Brown, November 2, 2019.

programs during the quilt shows like activities to entertain children. One year the Atlanta History Center came to their quilt show and taught the attendees how to preserve their quilts. While the Brown Sugar Stitchers held a quilt show every year for their first ten years, they have not regularly held a show in recent years. Ms. Woods stated they no longer hold quilt shows because the setup requires a great deal of work for only a one-day show. They would like to have a multi-day show, but they would need a larger space and security. Presently, the guild has not found a place for a longer quilt show, but they hope to start holding quilt shows again in the future. For Mrs. Maggitt, she enters her quilts into either the Brown Sugar Stitchers' quilt shows or other quilt shows because she is proud of her quilt and wants to display her work. Some quilt shows are juried and give the participants prizes and feedback, but Mrs. Maggitt has no interest in those types of quilt shows.[211] For the members, their quilts are works of art and passion. They want to

Figure 25. Brown Sugar Stitchers members at the Georgia Museum of Art (Brown Sugar Stitchers Quilt Guild, https://www.facebook.com/BrownSugarStitchers/)

[211] Elisa Woods, Decatur, Georgia, October 19, 2019.

share with each other and those who are interested. Some may want feedback while others do not, but quilt shows are one way they can display their quilts and skills.

The Brown Sugar Stitchers participate in a variety of other activities as well. While the guild does not formally organize or monitor bees, Ms. Woods explained that there are some groups of members who will get together to practice a certain quilting technique or take a quilting class together, but the guild does not keep track of the groups. Mrs. Brown explained how one of the guild members has an independent quilting group that is not a guild, but she will often bring speakers to the Brown Sugar Stitchers' meetings. Other members will get involved in her group as well. The Brown Sugar Stitchers will also participate in different events like festivals. Recently, members traveled to Athens, Georgia for the Georgia Museum of Art Family Days.[212] The museum exhibited a collection of quilts from Mary Bendolph of Gee's Bend, Alabama. In preparation, each member of the Brown Sugar Stitchers made quilt blocks and cut fabric pieces. They organized enough materials for 200 children to glue fabric pieces onto the blocks to create different quilt patterns.[213] This is an example of the kinds of activities the Brown Sugar Stitchers participate in as well as how the guild educates the broader community about quilting. Other groups and businesses approach the Brown Sugar Stitchers with requests or offers. For instance, a well-known international business, Black Rock, contacted the guild to commission a quilt to decorate their new Atlanta headquarters. Mrs. Brown stated that to have one of the member's work requested as

[212] Vanessa Howell Brown, November 2, 2019.
[213] Elisa Woods, Decatur, Georgia, October 19, 2019; Personal Observation, Decatur, Georgia, October 19, 2019; Vanessa Howell Brown, November 2, 2019.

representative of Atlanta's talent is a very high honor.[214] The Brown Sugar Stitchers have become increasingly known over the years in the Atlanta area and the state as well. Not only does the guild grow in members but so does their recognition. They have started receiving more fabric donations that they pass out to members to make charity quilts. Moreover, the guild has one of their quilts at the Georgia Quilt Museum.[215] Needless to say, the Brown Sugar Stitchers' prominence is only growing.

Every year the Brown Sugar Stitchers have two regular events for their members. In July, the guild's year ends, and another starts. They celebrate with an annual tea. The guild typically books a nice venue with food and drinks. At the event, they award members for making different categorical quilts with ribbons. For instance, those who made the most quilts, made charity quilts, and new members who made their first quilt.[216] At the tea, the new officers are also welcomed and take over the duties of those from the previous year or two. Throughout the year, the Brown Sugar Stitchers may also put forth quilting challenges. Challenges have also included making projects such as pin cushions. They are often due at the guild's July tea or the Christmas luncheon.[217] Every December, the guild has a party for its members that is at another location, and they celebrate the

[214] Elisa Woods, Decatur, Georgia, October 19, 2019; Personal Observation, Decatur, Georgia, October 19, 2019; Vanessa Howell Brown, November 2, 2019.
[215] Vanessa Howell Brown, November 2, 2019.
[216] Nancy DeCreny Franklin, November 15, 2019; Guild Member, November 14, 2019; Peggy Martin, November 1, 2019.
[217] Vanessa Howell Brown, November 2, 2019.

Figure 26. Peggy Martin and Nancy Franklin at the Brown Sugar Stitchers' 2019 holiday luncheon (Brown Sugar Stitchers Quilt Guild, https://www.facebook.com/BrownSugarStitchers/)

holidays together.[218] The guild also regularly participated in an event called the Tri-guild meeting. At least three guilds would gather together, eat, have a show and tell, and give away door prizes. Due to a lack of interest, the Brown Sugar Stitchers did not participate at the January 2020 Tri-guild meeting. Instead, the Brown Sugar Stitchers partnered with their library to have a community event. People came to the library where the guild members displayed quilts and held quilting demonstrations.[219]

One of the Brown Sugar Stitchers' other major activities that often aligns with the holiday season are their charitable donations. Since their inception, the Brown Sugar Stitchers have donated to the Carrie Steele-Pitts Home. One of the original members was on the board of the organization. Members make quilts and pillowcases to give to the children currently living at the orphanage. Additionally, the guild donates quilts to Faces, which serves children

[218] Nancy DeCreny Franklin, November 15, 2019; Guild Member, November 14, 2019; Vanessa Howell Brown, November 2, 2019.
[219] Nancy DeCreny Franklin, November 15, 2019.

undergoing facial and cranial surgeries and the like.[220] Throughout the guild's twenty years, the Brown Sugar Stitchers placed a focus on working in the community through both donations and educational programs. In addition to Carrie Steele-Pitts and Faces, they have made donations to the Innocence Project and Quilts of Valor who work with United States veterans. Ms. Woods described how her friend read about a man the Innocence Project helped, and she thought the guild should make a quilt for him. Members brought in coin blocks that they turned into a full quilt for him. He had been wrongfully incarcerated for a long time, and she said he was "outdone" at "the fact that somebody cared enough to make him a quilt."[221] The Brown Sugar Stitchers has also held educational programs at local public schools, with Girl Scouts, at the High Museum of Art, and at the National Black Arts Festival.[222] The guild encourages all their members to participate in their education and charitable activities, and the members of the Brown Sugar Stitchers are enthusiastic about their endeavors.

For the members, their charitable work and community engagement is important for them. In Mrs. Maggitt's opinion, their work reminds the community of the guild as well as keeps both the guild and community's history alive. Ms. Martin feels similarly in that the guild's name is put in a positive light. Additionally, she wants to make quilts for organizations like Carrie Steele-Pitts, because her "heart aches to know that children are in an orphanage. So, if [she] can make a quilt that's going to make somebody feel better…it helps [her] feel better really."[223] Another member expressed the same

[220] Elisa Woods, Interview by Darcie Scales, Decatur, Georgia, October 19, 2019; Nancy DeCreny Franklin, November 15, 2019; Peggy Martin, November 1, 2019; Personal Observation, Decatur, Georgia, October 19, 2019; Vanessa Howell Brown, November 2, 2019.
[221] Elisa Woods, Decatur, Georgia, October 19, 2019.
[222] Brown Sugar Stitchers Quilt Guild, "Community."
[223] Peggy Martin, November 1, 2019.

sentiments in that their quilts and pillowcases are "made from [their] hearts for those who really need them."[224] The members really like having an impact and contributing to their community, but Mrs. Brown notes that they have their limitations. While they could have even more engagement with their community, she stated that they start to feel overwhelmed with all that they do.[225] Nonetheless, community service and engagement is very meaningful to the members. Mrs. Franklin values their work quite a bit:

> "I think it's more important that we, or as important that we show quilting. That we display not just the results but the process with other people, with children, so that they can see what quilting is and…so the craft…doesn't get lost and that they can see that fabric arts is, it's a thing…that they can possibly do if they find interest in itself….throughout the years we'll do at least one or two things a year where we present to a group or…go to some event where we do a display or something like that. And it's always very gratifying to me."[226]

Therefore, charitable donations and community engagement and service are a large part of the Brown Sugar Stitchers' work and goals. The members really enjoy making quilts for those who need them, and they value the work they do as part of the guild.

The Brown Sugar Stitchers Quilt Guild and its activities are an important aspect of its members' lives. The various components of the guild allow for members to participate in activities they are interested in that are related to quilting. The guild and events its members partake in give the women an avenue to quilt together as well as share their knowledge with both members and the community. Furthermore, the women and their quilts inspire each other to keep quilting, try new and different designs, and further their quilting knowledge. They may either teach each other through the simple act of talking, members who teach workshops, or taking classes together. As part of the guild,

[224] Guild Member, November 14, 2019.
[225] Vanessa Howell Brown, November 2, 2019.
[226] Nancy DeCreny Franklin, November 15, 2019.

they have a community of women who share a similar passion for quilting that in turn furthers their understanding of and inspiration to quilt.

The Guild's Purpose, Meaning, and Future

For each of the interviewees, the Brown Sugar Stitchers has its own purpose and meaning for them. The guild comprises an integral part of their lives. Quilting is already a large part of their lives, and they wish to share their passion with others. The guild is their avenue for creating a community that not only lets them share their enthusiasm for quilting but also pass on quilting and sewing know-how, tips and tricks, and design ideas to each other. This knowledge is part of each woman's intangible cultural heritage, and the guild allows them to pass the skills onto others who are interested. Each of them values that opportunity the guild affords them, and they have hopes for the future of the Brown Sugar Stitchers.

Aside from the official mission of the guild, each member has their own purpose of the Brown Sugar Stitchers. For Ms. Martin, the guild is there simply "to bring together women of diverse backgrounds for the purpose of quilting." For her, the guild is a social outlet. She can meet others who have the same interest in quilting as her. While Ms. Martin believes it might be possible to get the same experience elsewhere, she thinks the guild really builds connections between her and other women. She knows many women through the guild and their quilting interests and preferences, and she keeps going to the meetings because they fulfill her between the show and tell, classes, people, and friendships. Ms. Martin hopes the guild will continue for at least the next twenty years as well.[227] Ms. Bradley feels similarly even if she is not yet part of the Brown Sugar

[227] Peggy Martin, November 1, 2019.

Stitchers, and she does not think the experience she has in guilds can be replicated elsewhere. The camaraderie among the women is unique. For her the purpose of quilting guilds is to educate quilters, non-quilters, and future quilters about quilt construction, the artistry of quilting, and how to preserve their quilts.[228] Guilds like the Brown Sugar Stitchers provide those opportunities for the women and the quilting community to continue and preserve their craft.

The other members of the Brown Sugar Stitchers have similar ideas about the guild and its future. Ms. Woods views the purpose of the Brown Sugar Stitchers is different than other guilds:

> "[L]ikeminded people…come together to facilitate their growth and understanding [of] quilting from an African American perspective in the sense that the reason why is because initially a lot of the bigger guilds were a little bit more hung up or a little, they emphasized traditional quilting and a lot of what we do may not be traditional. So that's why, that's why we say predominantly African American, because we have other members, but we're, we're taking it from that cultural perspective."[229]

Ms. Woods loves the guild and the meetings. Other than being president of the guild, she comes to the meetings for the programs and show and tell. She likes hearing about how other people's creativity works. Moreover, while she can subscribe to magazines and go online, they do not offer the same experience and feelings that the guild provides. For her the guild provides much of her motivation and energizes her to keep quilting. For the future of the guild, she and other members would like to see more challenging workshops that would provide even more inspiration for their quilting. Both Ms. Woods and Mrs. Franklin would like to bring back an annual quilt show again. While the guild has grown tremendously over the years, Ms. Woods also hopes they can bring in younger quilters.

[228] Renee Bradley, November 6, 2019.
[229] Elisa Woods, Decatur, Georgia, October 19, 2019.

Even though life can be quite busy, she thinks it is possible to have more young quilters in the guild. From Ms. Woods' perspective, they can learn from the mature quilters, and in kind they can offer their "youthful experimentation with creativity." As president, Ms. Woods also hopes they will soon gain 501(c)(3) Non-Profit status. She thinks it will be good for the future of the Brown Sugar Stitchers.

For two of the members the purpose of the guild is to keep the art of quilting alive and thriving. Both Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Maggitt state how the guild helps keep quilting relevant as a practice. Mrs. Maggitt believes quilting was dropping off as a practice, but the guild prevents it from going extinct by teaching people about quilting. For Mrs. Brown that includes introducing quilting to younger people, so the art never dies. Moreover, the guild provides continuity and a group of wonderful like-minded ladies, or a sisterhood, in Mrs. Brown's everyday life. In the guild she finds encouragement, further knowledge, exposure to new ideas and information, and competition. While she thinks that there is limited interest in young people to quilt, she hopes the diversity of the Brown Sugar Stitchers will only grow with people from all walks of life.[230] Mrs. Maggitt's hopes are for the guild's continuance and flourishing of its members. She is very social and volunteer oriented. The guild offers her the opportunity to keep learning and help people. She feels that she is part of a group in the Brown Sugar Stitchers. She keeps coming because of the warmth and community of the people.[231] Both Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Maggitt feel they can get the same experience from other places. Mrs. Maggitt feels the same warmth and comfort in her church. Mrs. Brown believes that every person is responsible for their own happiness, but she can form a sisterhood with others like she

[230] Vanessa Howell Brown, November 2, 2019.
[231] Gwendolyn Maggitt, November 19, 2019.

does in the Brown Sugar Stitchers.[232] Even so, the guild is still a valuable part of their lives where they have a community of women who share their same interests in quilting.

Another member of the Brown Sugar Stitchers views the purpose of the guild as sharing what they do with other quilters. For them the guild offers "friendship, learning new skills and meeting people, and seeing the many different quilt designs during show and tell." One of the aspects of the guild that they really enjoy is being around creative people and the energy they all emit. For them creativity is the main aspect of the guild. As a result, they feel that they can get similar experiences at museums, galleries, and theaters where they could talk to other people with creative leanings. At the moment, they are really enjoying being part of the Brown Sugar Stitchers and around all the other quilters.[233] For Mrs. Franklin, the guild celebrates quilting and brings together like-minded quilters who share the same interests. As treasurer she does not get to participate in all of the guild's activities like she used to, and she is looking forward to being a participant again. As one of the founding members, Mrs. Franklin is very proud of how long the Brown Sugar Stitchers has been around and how much they have grown. She hopes they can continue long into the future as the guild has sustained her quilting motivation and passion. Additionally, while she feels that other guilds and her small art quilt group or friends card group can offer similar experiences, the Brown Sugar Stitchers is still different, because she is able to share quilting with her "African American sisters."[234]

[232] Gwendolyn Maggitt, November 19, 2019; Vanessa Howell Brown, November 2, 2019.
[233] Guild Member, November 14, 2019.
[234] Nancy DeCreny Franklin, November 15, 2019.

Together, these members of the Brown Sugar Stitchers reveal how the guild functions in their lives and the meaning it gives to them. For some the guild is a unique and necessary part of their life. For others, the relationships and feelings they have within the Brown Sugar Stitchers may be replicated elsewhere in their lives, but the guild still serves a purpose of forming a community of women interested in quilting as well as working with the larger community by giving back and sharing quilting. Through the Brown Sugar Stitchers, these women are able to pass on their quilting and sewing skills and knowledge to those who are interested. They share and learn from each other about quilting, which they view as not only a craft but art, which may die out without their participation in the guild and intervention in the community. Therefore, the Brown Sugar Stitchers is an avenue for these women to practice their own intangible cultural heritage and pass it on to others.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

After talking to the women, listening to their stories, and examining how their guilds worked according to them, there is absolutely no doubt that these quilting guilds are a significant feature in these women's lives. They make friends through the guild and greatly enjoy having these other women and people in their lives. They bond over a shared interest in a hobby, business, and/or way of life. The guilds allow for them to practice creativity with other people in an enjoyable manner. Since many of them are retired, they stay busy by fully engaging with a guild. These guilds and the women who join them hold an immense amount of knowledge about their craft and their activities, and they are active in their larger communities. Thus, the question is how do crafting groups factor into women's intangible cultural heritage in the United States?

Methods

For the analysis, I coded the interviews based on the subject matter in the women's answers to look for distinct patterns among the topics they chose to discuss. Hence, the patterns noted do not take into account the added layer of the women's intangible cultural heritage. The patterns are solely based on the women's answers to the interview questions and the topics they wanted to discuss. The subjects, anecdotes, and themes of the guild the women spoke of indicates three major patterns: community, education, and community service. There are other patterns between the interviews as well, but these three are the most dominant. The findings of the interviews are related to the patterns, but they also take into account the role of quilting guilds in women's

intangible cultural heritage in the United States. Lastly, the findings examine how modern guilds' activities connect to their historic precedents in terms of activism. This analysis answers the question, how do crafting groups factor into women's intangible cultural heritage in the United States?

Patterns

After coding the interviews, the reduced data demonstrates definite patterns in the members' experience in the guilds. The activities, thoughts, actions, and values the guild members revealed through the interviews demonstrates that quilting guilds most of all provide a community for the women involved. The guild is a group of "like-minded" people who revolve around their shared common interest of sewing and quilting. They get to meet new people with those same interests through the guild, whether they are other members or people who come into contact with the guild. Over time, the members form relationships, friendships, and partnerships with each other. They offer someone to talk to and a support system. The women help each other with their quilting and sewing or with broader topics such as their families and lives. Moreover, they collaborate with each other on quilting. They share their projects, design and pattern choices, techniques, and stories with each other. As a whole, they all have good feelings when they are participating in the guild. These include emotions such as enjoyment, comfort, accomplishment, happiness, warmth, and relaxation. The guild provides a sense of consistency, belonging, fulfillment, and fun in their lives. Therefore, their interactions often spill over into other aspects of their lives. They may help each other with a personal problem or go to other events together. These events are more often than not related to crafting too. For members, the word most associated with their guild is overwhelmingly

camaraderie. Therefore, a guild is most definitely a community of predominantly women who share a love and interest for quilting.

Another pattern noticed among the data is the education guilds provide for members. The guild itself is an instrument for members by offering workshops, speakers, and lectures for members. The guild is there to teach beginners and beyond how to quilt. Even more, the members teach each other what they know about sewing and quilting. They may share patterns, templates, supplies, and techniques with each other. They are always willing to offer advice on a project if needed. Teaching expands beyond the boundaries of the guild as well. The women will teach anyone who has an interest, which includes friends, church members, and family. Furthermore, the guild offers an avenue for them to share quilting with the community. They share not only their work and the effort it took to make their quilts but also the process and knowledge of quilting itself. It is important for them to share with others, like children, how to quilt so that the art and knowledge does not die. Through the education guilds provide for members and the means they give to teach the community, members personally grow their quilting skills and repertoire. The guilds also allow for variety and different interests in terms of quilt aesthetics and design. As a result, the members are able to continue to grow and learn as quilters as well as share their knowledge with other members, the community, and people in their lives.

The last major pattern throughout all the interviews is the presence of community service within guilds. Community service is extremely important to members of the guild. Making quilts for charity makes an impact on the community, the guild, and the members. The women feel that they are doing good work by offering comfort and

happiness to those in need. Moreover, they personally feel better by contributing to their community. Their way and ability of giving back is making quilts. Furthermore, they feel that their community service is a positive reflection on the guild itself. Community service is often the instigator and inspiration for the women to quilt and contribute to the guild as well as make a larger impact. Community service for many members is the dominant value and purpose of the guild.

There are other patterns in the data that are notable albeit not as overwhelmingly present as the others. For all but one of the twelve members interviewed, their female relatives knew how to sew and taught them as well. Five of the women mentioned the home economics classes they were also required to take as girls in school. Even though the women in their life taught them to sew, all the guild members learned to quilt later in life either on their own or by taking classes, researching, and/or participating in a guild. They used the sewing skills taught to them by their families to learn quilting. Quilting is different than the sewing practices the women's families participated in like tailoring and alterations. Furthermore, quilting and crafting carries over into other parts of the members' lives. Many of them know other crafts such as knitting, crocheting, macramé, and paper arts. They craft for themselves, for charity, and for gifts for their friends, family, and acquaintances. Moreover, they often share their quilting and crafting passions with family members or friends not in the guild. They will also participate in other crafting events that are separate from the guild, and they may bring fellow members or other friends.

Each of the women either found the guild on their own or they were invited by members who were friends or strangers. Only two members' mothers were involved in a

crafting group. One woman's mother had quilted with women at her church. The other woman's mother was part of a guild, but she only joined a guild once she was invited by another member. Four women have either been involved in guilds and crafting groups in the past or joined others since participating in their first guild. The remaining eight women have only participated in the one guild. Five women felt that they could not get the same experience of the guild elsewhere except for three. Two members thought they could receive the same social element in their church and other clubs, while another felt they could receive the creative energy they experience in the guild at museums and such. Finally, all the members quilt and sew as a creative hobby for themselves or as volunteer efforts for the community. There are three exceptions that quilt for another reason as well. Those members either currently or plan in the future to use quilting for their professional careers and businesses. Additionally, for eight of the interviewees, the guild is the only social group they participate in or they did not mention another group. Four members mentioned other guilds and social groups that they enjoy. These are some of the smaller but no less notable patterns revealed in the interviews.

Findings

Intangible Cultural Heritage

A group of people's intangible cultural heritage is the knowledge, practices, and skills that are passed down within the group. The Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage defines intangible cultural heritage specifically as "practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith."[235] In the United States, crafting and

[235] UNESCO, *Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, Paris, General Conference of UNESCO, 2003, https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention (accessed October 7, 2019) 5.

quilting in particular are firmly integrated into this country and its people's history. The knowledge of how to craft, sew, and quilt has been and continues to be passed down through women. Therefore, the following findings reveal how quilting guilds and other crafting groups are vital for the passage and safeguarding of women's intangible cultural heritage in the United States.

The research and interviews make it clear that there are many elements and instances of intangible cultural heritage present in quilting guilds. Sewing circles, quilting bees, and the like were at their height in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At that point in time, women's participation in crafting groups were part of their intangible heritage as mothers, daughters, and their daughters chose to participate in the groups; however, crafting groups declined afterwards due to industrialization and mechanization of textile industries. Products that women used to have to make in the home and needed other women's help with were no longer worth the effort and time. They could often be bought cheaper. This decline would have been around the time the interviewees' mothers and grandmothers were growing up and sewing. Crafting groups would not have been very noticeable or prevalent. Yet, they never disappeared and were still present in very small ways with the occasional church group or when families had to make their own products. Likewise, sewing and quilting did not leave the home completely. Those activities could still be the cheaper alternative when materials were scraps and salvaged or for mending what they already had to make textiles last. Today, quilting guilds and the like are the modern manifestation of sewing circles, quiltings, and quilting bees. In guilds, women find a community of support, encouragement to continue and advance their craft, further education, and a method for passing on their knowledge.

All but one of the interviewees mentioned that their mothers, grandmothers, or aunts taught them to sew, but only two women mentioned that their mothers participated in a crafting group. One quilted with ladies at church while they ate, and their children played. Another joined a guild after her children left for college. One conclusion for why the interviewees may participate in a crafting group when most of their female relatives did not is that they experienced the revival of crafting groups in the latter half of the twentieth century. None of the members joined a guild due to a relative's participation, but they still sought the guild out or joined after an invitation. This fact reveals that crafting groups are still appealing and useful for women to participate in and pass on their crafting knowledge. Crafting groups survived industrialization and the availability of cheap goods. Thus, the act of joining a crafting group is part of women's intangible cultural heritage. Intangible cultural heritage is allowed to change and be recreated by its community. History shows that women's participation in crafting groups only had a brief interruption before they became widely known and used again. With the continued presence and modern revival of crafting groups among young people, participating in a crafting group like a quilting guild is once again firmly part of women's intangible cultural heritage.

Beyond joining and participating in a guild, the group allows women to pass on their knowledge and skills that their mothers, aunts, and grandmothers transmitted to them. None of the interviewed members' relatives taught them quilting, but women in four of the interviewee's lives did quilt even if they did not teach the women. With the prevalence of quilting in American history and culture, it would be remiss to assume all women in a guild did not learn how to quilt from their mothers or other relatives. Even

though the interviewees learned to quilt elsewhere, all but one did learn to sew from the women in their lives. They use those skills while quilting, and they teach tips, tricks, and techniques to others in the guild. This knowledge is part of their intangible cultural heritage in that their family taught them, and they are now teaching others through the guild. The passage of this intangible cultural heritage is present within all three of the main patterns found in the interviews: community, education, and community service. In each component of the guild the women are sharing with each other quilting and sewing knowledge, designs, stories, patterns, advice, and projects. They are both teaching the process of quilting and sharing their passion for quilting with each other and the community. Five of them state that they cannot find that experience elsewhere. Those that thought otherwise were referencing the specific social or creative element that the guild offers them and not the guild as a whole. While quilting is a universal practice, that does not lower its importance to these women and their history in the United States. Three women stated that the guilds keep quilting alive. Without them, they believe quilting might die as a practice. Thus, the guilds provide an avenue for them to practice their intangible cultural heritage as a community as well as pass the knowledge on to each other, the larger community, and other interested people.

The women feel strongly that the guild continues the art of quilting, and the knowledge of how to quilt is passed through the guild. Six of the women have attempted to teach family and friends to quilt. Often, both children and adults lose interest. Several members commented that they would teach anyone who has an interest, but they either do not have anyone in their life who is interested in learning to sew and quilt or those that do have an interest do not have the time or get frustrated. Five interviewees noted that

there is an interest among young people to quilt and sew, but their lives are too busy. They have partners, jobs, and children to take care of among other activities. Therefore, the guilds provide an avenue to the women who do know how to quilt and sew to hold onto the knowledge, pass it onto each other, and share with the community. Their presence and community service may inform and inspire others who were not aware of crafting to take the activity up at once or at a later point. The guilds will be there for when those who are interested finally have the time to participate.

While crafting groups have historically been extremely gendered, they are no longer restricted to women; yet, crafting groups are still specific to women's intangible cultural heritage. Men can and do join crafting groups like quilting guilds. They are welcomed by the other members of the group. They can be active participants and reciprocate the support and interests of the community formed by the guild. All of the interviewees enjoy having men in the guild and seeing their quilts and designs as they are often much different than the women's quilt aesthetics. Though, three members mentioned how there are many famous male quilters. One felt that they receive more credit than women who are just as skilled. Another woman thought men in the guild validated and legitimized the women's presence and work. This demonstrates how there is still inequality regarding craftwork and art, such as quilting. There is still the prevalent idea that quilting and other craftwork is the woman's domain. Many of the women had thoughts and beliefs on why there are so few men involved in quilting guilds: the stigma of masculinity, appearance of femininity, lack of interest, embarrassment, separation between genders and art and work, and quilting as woman's art and work. Thus, one

reason for why participation in crafting groups is part of only women's intangible cultural heritage at the moment is the continued gendering of craftwork and quilting.

Even though a few men do participate in the groups, there is not a historical context for their participation as there is for women. Women often taught all of their children how to sew and such, but only the girls were expected to continue and prove their worth using their skills. While that may no longer be the case today, men are still discouraged from participating due to the current expectations of masculinity in American society. Only one of the interviewees spoke of how her father enjoyed quilting and embroidery. As equality and equity grows between the genders, more men may participate in crafting groups. A community can recreate their intangible cultural heritage as it is transferred from one generation to the next and reacts to its environment. Therefore, crafting groups have the possibility to become part of men's intangible cultural heritage as well, but that seems to be unlikely or at least far in the future. Instead, the limited presence of men in guilds, the uneven recognition between skilled male and female quilters, and the long, gendered history of craft demonstrates that participation in crafting groups and guilds is part of women's intangible cultural heritage.

Based on the interviews, the knowledge of how to sew and the passion for crafting is passed down through women in the United States. Additionally, quilting guilds and similar crafting groups are currently how women convey their crafting knowledge to other women and girls. The guild provides the avenue for women to share their sewing, quilting, and crafting knowledge with each other and the larger community. Only two women's mothers participated in a crafting group like them, but guilds and other crafting groups are a modern manifestation for transmitting the crafting knowledge that is part of

women's cultural heritage. Moreover, guilds and crafting groups are definitively part of only women's intangible cultural heritage. While men do participate, the knowledge that is transmitted through the guild is still distinctly tied to women. Groups change, adapt, and recreate their intangible cultural heritage in response to their environments, and guilds have developed to be a way for American women to pass on crafting knowledge. Thus, quilting guilds and other crafting groups play a large role in women's intangible cultural heritage in the United States.

Quilting guilds serve a vital role in women's safeguarding of their intangible cultural heritage. According to the 2003 Convention's definition, safeguarding involves "measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage."[236] Three of the women specifically stated that their guild ensures the continuance of quilting. Guilds also teach members how to photograph, document, and preserve their quilts through programs or members sharing their knowledge. Guilds keep the art of quilting alive, help transmit quilting knowledge, educate the public about quilting, especially children and young adults, and help women preserve and document their quilts. Thus, quilting guilds definitively safeguard women's quilting practices and traditions. Furthermore, this can translate to other crafting groups and their pursuits in safeguarding their particular craft.

Modern quilt guilds and crafting groups bear similar purposes and activities to their historic predecessors. They allow for women to have group events for enjoyment as

[236] UNESCO, *Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 6.

well as passing their knowledge onto others. While the cult of domesticity no longer exists and women do not have to prove their worth through their craftwork, many of the women interviewed were required to take home economics in school; however, they continued sewing and crafting because they enjoyed the work. They later sought out or stumbled upon groups that provided an avenue for likeminded women to craft together. Likewise, crafting for survival is not necessarily essential anymore, but the women will still use their quilts and projects in their everyday lives. More often than not, the women quilt as a form of artistic expression. Like their historic counterparts, quilts can still express women's emotions, stories, and the indescribable. Moreover, many historic crafting groups dedicated a portion of their time if not all their time to crafting for charity. Both the guilds demonstrate that giving back to their community is still just a present in today's crafting groups as it was in the past.

Activism

Historic crafting groups participated in political and emancipatory activities like abolition, suffrage, and the Underground Railroad, and used their craftwork as political emblems. Women's crafting groups throughout the twentieth century embodied this notion as well. The quilters in Gee's Bend represented aspects of the Civil Rights Movement like African American voter disenfranchisement. Others fought for women's rights during the early feminist movements. Additional social movements such as the back-to-the-land movement and traditional arts revivals as well as changing fashion trends led to the revitalization of crafting groups. In the twenty-first century, Betsy Greer's coinage of craftivism and Julia Bryan-Wilson's discussion of textiles and politics demonstrate how crafting is still part of women's political activities today. Even more

recently, the Pussyhat Project reveals just how integrated crafting, women, and crafting groups are with women's political and emancipatory actions.[237] Furthermore, crafting group activities and activism have moved to the internet in the form of blogs, websites, forums, YouTube channels, and much more. While the women interviewed did not discuss political actions, they did mention learning quilting basics, techniques, and patterns from the internet.

Even though the participants did not mention direct forms of activism in their interviews, they were extremely passionate about their charitable activities. The Cotton Patch Quilters' charity bee sends quilts to Project Safe, which helps vulnerable mothers and children in Athens. These women and their children may be facing situations such as domestic abuse and the like. Similarly, the charity bee sends quilts and blankets to Prevent Child Abuse, a local women's shelter, Habitat for Humanity, and Bigger Vision, which is a homeless shelter. Each of these charities and non-profits are helping people in vulnerable and dire situations. The quilts the Cotton Patch Quilters send are a comfort to these people. Moreover, the charities can request quilts from the charity bee that can be auctioned or raffled to raise funds. The Brown Sugar Stitchers send as many quilts as they can every year to the Carrie Steele-Pitts group home for each of the orphaned children. The quilts and pillowcases are a comfort and joy for the kids in the home. The Brown Sugar Stitchers also made a quilt for a man the Innocence Project helped. He had been wrongfully incarcerated, and he told the guild how much the quilt they made for him meant. He was overwhelmed over the thought that went into making a quilt for him. Quilts provide physical and emotional warmth. The quilts these guilds and women are

[237] Pussyhat Project, "Our Story," https://www.pussyhatproject.com/our-story (accessed March 4, 2020).

donating are going to vulnerable people who need their comfort and the knowledge that someone cares about them. While several historic crafting groups participated in more obvious acts of activism and protest, they still completed items to give to those in need. People today and women in those historic crafting groups would agree that these causes are a form of activism, because they help the disadvantaged and the vulnerable. Women in these guilds are doing what they can with the skills they have to acknowledge and provide warmth to those in need in their community.

Conclusions

Further research is needed to explore every aspect of the role of crafting groups in all women's intangible cultural heritage. This includes exploration into the role of online blogs, forums, and social media in women's crafting groups and their intangible cultural heritage. Additionally, there needs to be more research into crafting groups with different organizational structures, groups with other diverse makeups such as those with predominantly Native American or Latinx members, and groups in other regions of the United States. Finally, the role of craftwork and crafting groups specifically among activists and young adults should be explored more in the future. Many do not have the time necessary to fully engage with a guild due to full-time jobs, family, and other social commitments. They may be using social media groups, online forums, and blogs to partake in crafting and share with each other. Thus, additional research will further uncover and strengthen the role of crafting groups in women's intangible cultural heritage.

Today, most people quilt and craft for pleasure and not necessarily for their survival. Thus, many women do not know how to quilt and craft, especially if there is not

an interest. Women who do have quilting, sewing, and crafting knowledge use guilds like the Brown Sugar Stitchers and the Cotton Patch Quilters to pass down that knowledge as part of their intangible cultural heritage. For the most part, the women's mothers, aunts, and grandmothers taught them to sew. They largely learned to quilt on their own with the help of classes, research, and the guilds, because they had a deep interest in quilting. While their relatives were not part of any crafting group—with the exception of two—these women pass their knowledge and skills onto their guild members. They now use quilting guilds to share their intangible cultural heritage with each other as well as the community with the hopes that quilting and the group will continue long into the future. The knowledge required to make quilts as well as certain patterns are part of women's intangible cultural heritage. This fact is not in dispute. Rather, academics and the wider public have not discussed women's use of sewing circles, bees, and guilds as a method of completing projects, socializing, and gathering a support system in the United States not to mention as part of women's intangible cultural heritage. These crafting groups were at their height during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their popularity waned until movements in the latter half of the twentieth century encouraged women to work together again as well as practice creativity and crafting. While quilting and sewing is a universal practice that has its own unique history in each place, quilting is an indisputable part of America's history. In the United States, the affluent were the first to quilt, but quilting soon gained its foothold among everyday American women. Today, quilting and crafting groups are an integral part of American women's heritage.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Background Information

1. Name
2. Age
3. Ethnicity/race
4. Number of years of involvement in the group

Personal Involvement

1. How did you learn to sew?
2. Have you ever been in a different guild or crafting group before?
3. Do you have any relatives who are involved or have been involved in the group or a different group? Was your mother or grandmother in any type of group or guild? Do you have children or grandchildren interested in or involved in a group?
4. Tell me how you came to be involved in this group.
5. Tell me what being part of this group has meant to you.
6. Describe what you hear and see when you are attending a meeting.
7. Tell me how you feel at a meeting.
8. What keeps you coming to the meetings?
9. Do you think you could get the same experience elsewhere?

Group Operations

1. What is the purpose of the group?
2. How did the group begin?

3. How was the name of the group chosen?
4. How often do you meet?
5. Tell me about how the group is organized.
6. Are there any men in the group?
7. What do you think about men in a guild?
8. Why do you think more men do not participate in guilds?
9. Do you require dues or some sort of specific contribution for women to be part of the group?
10. Do you keep the number of group members limited?
11. Was there ever a time the group stopped meeting?
12. What instigated the women to start meeting again?
13. Tell me what you see as the value of this group for members.
14. What is the value of charity work and community service to the group's activities?
15. Tell me what happens at a meeting.
16. How has the group changed over time?

Activities at Home, Between Groups, and/or Outside Groups

1. How do you interact with members outside of meetings?
2. How do you share your crafting knowledge with other people outside the group?
3. How do you use your crafting skills outside of the group?

Prospective Future of The Group

1. What else would you like to see in this group?
2. What do you see for the future of the group?

3. Is there anything else you would like to share that we haven't talked about?

Projects

1. Tell me how you came to make this piece…. (could involve design, color choices, skills, expertise, learning, etc).
2. How long did it take you to make?
3. What influence did the members of the group have on the project?
4. If you made this again, would you do anything differently?
5. Tell me about the feelings you experience when you are working on/have completed a project.