

PIECING OUR PAST TOGETHER—WE'RE 40!

The Old Capitol Quilters Guild is celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2021. This is the eleventh in a series of articles drawn from the materials collected and preserved by the OCQG Historians, Newsletter Editors, and others that illustrate both how much things have changed and how much is still the same.

Nearly Forty Years of OCQG Quilt Shows

From the earliest days of the Old Capitol Quilters Guild (when it was still known as “Quilting for Fun”), shows of members’ work have been important in sharing our members’ talents and love of quilting with each other and with the community at large. The following summary of the Guild’s eight shows from 1993 to 2017 is drawn from the records saved by show chairpersons, newsletters, and the notebooks compiled by Guild historians throughout the years. The shows have shared several common goals: raising funds for guild activities, increasing membership, and showcasing members’ talents.

As we get ready for the next show in June 2022, we hope the history and successes of previous shows will encourage current members to contribute their time and creations (as part of the exhibit or for sale in the silent auction) and, by extension, inspire many more to join us as members.

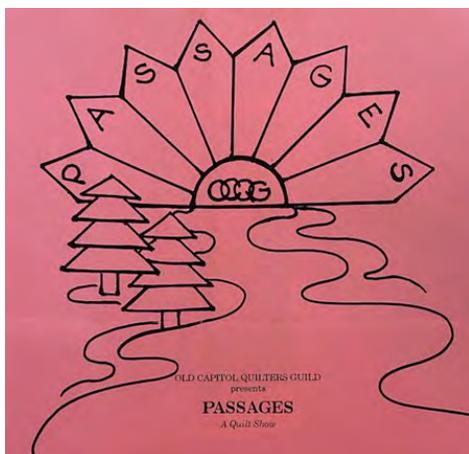
Note about raffle quilts: For many years, raffle quilts were important components of the shows. You can find photos and descriptions of all raffle quilts in the January 2021 *OCQG Newsletter*.

May 6-7, 1983: First Show. Fab’s Fabric Store

The goal of the Guild’s first show was to raise funds for speakers and other expenses. It was held at Fab’s Fabric Store (in the old Jo-Ann Fabrics location on Riverside Drive in Iowa City). The program listed a total of 49 quilts that were entered. Members also created a raffle quilt to raise funds. Two of our founding members who still belong to the Guild – Nancy Granner and Jo Betts – played active roles in organizing the event. Ruth Rittenmeyer was the featured quilter.



Program for first show in February 1983.



Program from “Passages” show in May 1995

May 12-13, 1995: “Passages.” National Guard Armory

Kathy Mueller chaired the 1995 show. A newspaper article at the time said it was the first show for the Guild. Perhaps it was perceived that way at the time because the 1983 show was more modest by comparison. “Friendship Garden” was the raffle quilt in 1995. There were 151 quilts listed in the program.



Quilts displayed during “Passages” show in 1995.

June 26-28, 1998: “Reflections of the Past and Present—150 Years of Quilting.”

Plum Grove Historic Home

This show was cosponsored by the OCQG and the Johnson County Historical Society (JCHS). Inside the home, historic quilts from the JCHS collections and individuals as well as contemporary quilts created by OCQG members were draped on furniture and hung on portable racks for display. Outside on the grounds, Guild members demonstrated the art of quilting, invited visitors to try their hand at quilting a few stitches, and provided activities for kids. OCQG members on the committee included Beth Cullen, Sally Glass [Strah], Diane Lohr, and Jackie Morrival.

June 9-10, 2000: "Seasons." Montgomery Hall, Johnson County Fair Grounds

Planning for the 2000 show, chaired by Sally Glass [Strah], began in October 1998. In keeping with the theme of the show, members were encouraged to enter pieces with a holiday theme or reflecting a season of the year. The admission fee was \$3.00. Attendance for the two-day show was 546. The program lists 44 large quilts and 58 small quilts. A silent auction included 22 miniature quilts donated by members and raised \$911. The proceeds, supplemented with additional OCQG funds, enabled donations of \$500 each to the Domestic Violence Intervention Project and the Nest of Johnson County. The event also included a raffle quilt, voting for viewer's choice, a merchant mall (this appears to be the first Guild show with vendors), a food court, and door prizes.



Viewing quilts displayed at "Seasons" show in June 2000.

Program from "Seasons" show in June 2000.

**June 6-8, 2003: "Remembrance."** Old Capitol Mall in the old JC Penney's store

The 2003 show was held at the Old Capitol Mall in the old JC Penney's store. An article in the Press-Citizen said that 150 members of the guild would be participating in the show, many of whom had incorporated Civil War reproduction fabrics into their quilts in keeping with the show's theme. Members also contributed scrap pineapple blocks to create a raffle quilt. Vendors were also popular. Show chairs, Diane Lohr and Diedre Fleener, reported that there were 834 paid admissions to the show, calculating that with the addition of nonpaying children and Gallery Walk participants, more than 1,000 people viewed the show.

Remembrances

Old Capitol Quilters Guild



2003 Show Logo



2006 Show Logo

June 3-4, 2006: "Silver Threads" (25th anniversary of the Guild). Sharpless Auction Complex

Verlaine Ockenfels and Bonnie Levien chaired the 2006 show. It included a pre-show evening Gala to celebrate the Guild's 25th anniversary in the evening of June 2, giving members time to visit the vendors and view the entries before they welcomed the public the next day. The Show's program lists 238 quilts and 16 pieces classified as clothing or an accessory. The 2006 raffle quilt, "Pink Lemonade," was a group effort led by committee chair Kathyl Jogerst.

"Quilt Fests" in 2009, 2012, 2017, and 2022. First United Methodist Church, Iowa City

The three most recent shows have all been held at the First United Methodist Church in downtown Iowa City, with quilts displayed by draping them over the pews and hanging them from the balconies in the sanctuary. In the article on page 9, Janann Schiele, who was co-chair of the 2009 show committee, describes how the Guild came to adopt this model which will be used again for the June 2022 show. All of the Quilt Fests to date have coincided, by design, with the Iowa City Arts Fest which has boosted the attendance for the shows and visibility of the Guild.



Logo for all Quilt Fests 2009, 2012, 2017, and 2022

2009 Quilt Fest (#1)

Janann Schiele and Celia McHenry chaired the 2009 show, the first in an ongoing series of church pew displays that we have replicated ever since. The program lists 206 quilts (but doesn't specify categories). Total attendance for the show was 594. Income from free will offerings came to \$952.50. Silent auction proceeds of \$1,876 were donated to flood relief. The drawing for a basket-themed raffle quilt was held during the show.

2012 Quilt Fest (#2)

Nancy Johns, Celia McHenry, and Janann Schiele co-chaired the 2012 show. The newsletter lists 212 quilts displayed, 56 members volunteered their time. Paid attendance totaled 388. Viewer's Choice ended in a tie between Pam Ehrhardt's Double "Wedding Ring" and Beth Yeates' "Color Wheel." The Silent Auction had 94 items donated from 33 members, 76 items sold. The altar area was used for an in-memoriam display of quilts by three members who had died in 2011. While new church rules meant that we couldn't sell tickets for a raffle quilt during the show, an effort to publicize the 2012 quilt throughout the community sold 4,283 tickets and allowed the Guild to donate \$3,000 to the Johnson County Community Foundation to be used in support of the arts.



Quilts displayed on pews in the First United Methodist church in 2012. The "in memoriam" display around altar honored members who had died during the previous year: Sugar Mark, Candace Carmichael, and Linda Groepper.



Quilts displayed at 2012 show.

2017 Quilt Fest (#3)

Pam Ehrhardt and Vicki Walch co-chaired the 2017 show. 56 members entered a total of 221 quilts: 124 large, 71 wall, 19 small, plus 7 table runners. Viewer's Choice went to Jackie Morrical for her "Glorious Hexagons." Instead of charging an entry fee to the show, we offered chances on winning door prizes donated by local quilt shops and other merchants in exchange for a donation to the Guild. Melanie McNeil developed a 4-minute slide show, "A Quilt is More than a Blanket," that ran on a loop throughout the show. It describes the effort and creativity that goes into making a quilt as well as the cost of materials and labor, hoping to give viewers perspective on the value – monetary and personal – of hand-crafted quilts.



Display of red and white quilts around altar in 2017.

2022 Quilt Fest (#4)

Coming next year in June 2022! We'll start organizing the committee soon. If you would like to be involved in planning the next show, please contact Pam Ehrhardt at pje281@gmail.com or call 319-800-9428.

Janann Schiele on the Origins of QuiltFest Church Pew Displays

Janann Schiele has been a Show Committee volunteer for every show since 2003 and co-chaired both the 2009 and 2012 shows. Just after the 2017 show, she wrote this account of how the OCQG came to use the church pew display model for the 2009 show and why it has continued to be such a success.

“In 2008 it was time to plan another show but we were stymied by the fact that there was no large, clean, affordable space in Iowa City to do a quilt show with quilts hung on piping and drape, room for vendors and food service, and affordable. Debbie Bowles from Minneapolis was a guest speaker at a meeting in the fall and heard our discussion during the meeting. Debbie stayed at my home that night after the meeting and over a glass of wine she told me about a church pew quilt show that she had attended in San Antonio, Texas. She said it was the most spectacular quilt show she had ever seen and probably the easiest to present. She put me in touch with the chair of the show and he shared lots of information and suggestions.

“I was excited by the idea and immediately went in search of a church large enough to hold a show. I twisted Celia McHenry's arm and she agreed to be co-chair. We presented the idea to the guild and received a good response from the members. The weekend of Arts Fest seemed to be the perfect time to have a quilt show in the beautiful Methodist Church in downtown Iowa City. The show committee pulled the show together in just a few months and held the first church pew quilt show in 2009. Everyone did an amazing job. The space constraints meant no hassles with vendors or food. The show was reduced to a raffle quilt, silent auction, children's area, service display and quilts covering the pews and hung from the railings. The show was a success and has been repeated in 2012 and 2017.

“We have learned a lot and have improved the process over the years. ... The addition of the door prizes and gift baskets [in 2017] was a great idea. The increase in the quantity and quality of the silent auction items certainly made for a better show and profits. But most of all, the team work and getting to know others in the guild is a huge benefit to being a member of this great guild.

“The Quilt Fest Display is unique in our area. It appeals to both quilters and non-quilters. It is a spectacular sight which is easily set up in just a few hours, with reasonable rent, and a whole new audience of people with whom we can share our love of quilting. What could be better?”

Linzee McCray also described her experiences when attending the IC Arts Fest on Saturday evening after the 2017 show closed:

“After the show I went downtown to hear some music and I cannot get over the comments I heard from people (and I heard a number of them, since I was still carrying my quilts!)

“People were absolutely blown away by the quilt show and what impressed me so much is that the people who were especially enthralled weren't quilters. The artistry displayed, the quantity of quilts, and the effect of walking into that church and being overwhelmed (in a good way) by the color, texture, and pattern left such a strong impression.”

Nancy Johns sent this message in response to Linzee's message:

“You should also know our minister [at the First United Methodist Church where the show took place] was equally impressed and made a point of talking about it during all three services. Charles our custodian called several members to come see the quilts on Saturday.”

