

Wayside Quilt Guild History

Our raffle quilt and the September speaker on Civil War quilts have me in the Civil War mindset.

Fourscore and seven years ago—oh, no, 28 years ago. Actually in 1985 a very creative and lovely lady Rosemary Ponte, owner of fabric shop Rosemary's Garden on the Post Road in Sudbury came up with the idea of Wayside Quilters. A New England Quilters Guild originated in 1976. Rosemary spoke to friends and put a notice in the local papers to form Wayside Quilters that joined the other 56 chapters.

Rosemary was an accomplished quilter and seamstress. Her ability went beyond traditional quilts to original designs for clothing and wall hangings. She was truly an inspiration to those who had little experience with the craft. She continues to create and awe those around her while she lives in her native state, Tennessee.

Wayside quilters first met on various dates, no set calendar, and had no permanent home. They met at a variety of sites—Sudbury Methodist Church, Goodnow Library in the old All Purpose Room, and at the First Baptist Church. Dues were \$15. Looking back at records of early workshops the cost was \$30. Obviously WQ has tried very hard to keep workshop costs at reasonable level.

Early on members who were experienced gave willingly of time to teach "Wannabe Quilters." Listed in an early newsletter were Ellen Fisher, Marianne Hatton, Anita Look, Ruth Riceman and Annette Spitzer. Applique expert Abertine Veenstra generously guided those new to that skill.

Many well-known speakers like Nancy Halpern, Sylvia Epstein, Jo Diggs, Bethany Reynolds, Gerald Roy and Carol Doak have appeared before Wayside Quilters. Renowned speakers are always a great enticement to new members.

The first show was in 1987 at the Sudbury Town Hall. The guild had a raffle quilt. The instructions for labeling were much less precise than now. Instructions for the ever present sleeve were given for ease of hanging.

Activities chairmen have led the group in numerous interesting projects—fat quarter exchange, block of the month, box exchange, mystery quilt, brown bag challenge, uglies auction and many more.

In 2006 the guild decided that storage in member basements was insufficient. The storage locker in Marlborough is now a fixture, and much used to store fabric, batting, completed quilts and albums from the past.

Through the years Outreach has made hundreds of quilts to give to those who are in need. Abby's House in Worcester, Springhouse in Berlin, a Framingham shelter for abused women and children, and a Framingham Veteran's home are some of the recipient sites. There is no greater pleasure than to see how much the recipients appreciate and enjoy the quilts made with love by Wayside Quilters.

Wayside quilters continue to be a vibrant group of ladies and one gentleman. Preparations are underway for the biennial show in Oct. 2014. The history continues....

by Judy Merra, 2013