

Cuesta Benberry



(1923-2007)

Quilt historian, author, Always There: The African-American Presence in American Quilts
Inducted in 1983 at the Continental Quilting Congress, Arlington, Virginia
Research Associate: Mary Sue Hannan

Cuesta's interest in quilting began with the study of quilt block patterns, when she was serving as a teacher and school librarian. Her great research abilities brought her to the attention of Patricia Almy's magazine, *Nimble Treasures* where many of her articles appeared.

She produced so many articles that she requested some be printed without her by-line. Later articles by Cuesta were found in *Quilter's Newsletter Magazine* and in *Quilters' Journal*. Her research is so vast that in nearly every quilt book today, Cuesta Benberry will be quoted in the text or her name will appear in the bibliography.

Her focus of African American quilts and quilters led to a perfect paper, "Afro-American Women and Quilts," for the first symposium of a new organization, the American Quilt Study Group, in 1980. Later she curated several exhibits of African American quilts, accompanied by publications: *Always There: The African American Presence in American Quilts* (1992) and *a Piece of My Soul: Quilts by Black Arkansans* (2000). Her only quilt, a sampler, also reflects her research, for it is made up of blocks known to have appeared in earlier African American quilts.

In 1997, she joined Honoree Joyce Gross in curating an exhibit that was accompanied by a seminar, "20th Century Quilts: 1900-1970: Women Make Their Mark" at the Museum of American Quilter's Society, Paducah, Kentucky.