

Say Yes! to Michigan's Mary Schaf er

I hope the Michigan tourism office doesn't mind my referencing their slogan as I write about an Honoree from their State. Maybe after reading this, you'll want to visit some of Mary Schafer's quilts in East Lansing, so I think it's a legitimate use. But before we "travel" to the Great Lakes/ Wolverine/ Mitten state, there's some unfinished business from my earlier blog about Carrie Hall.

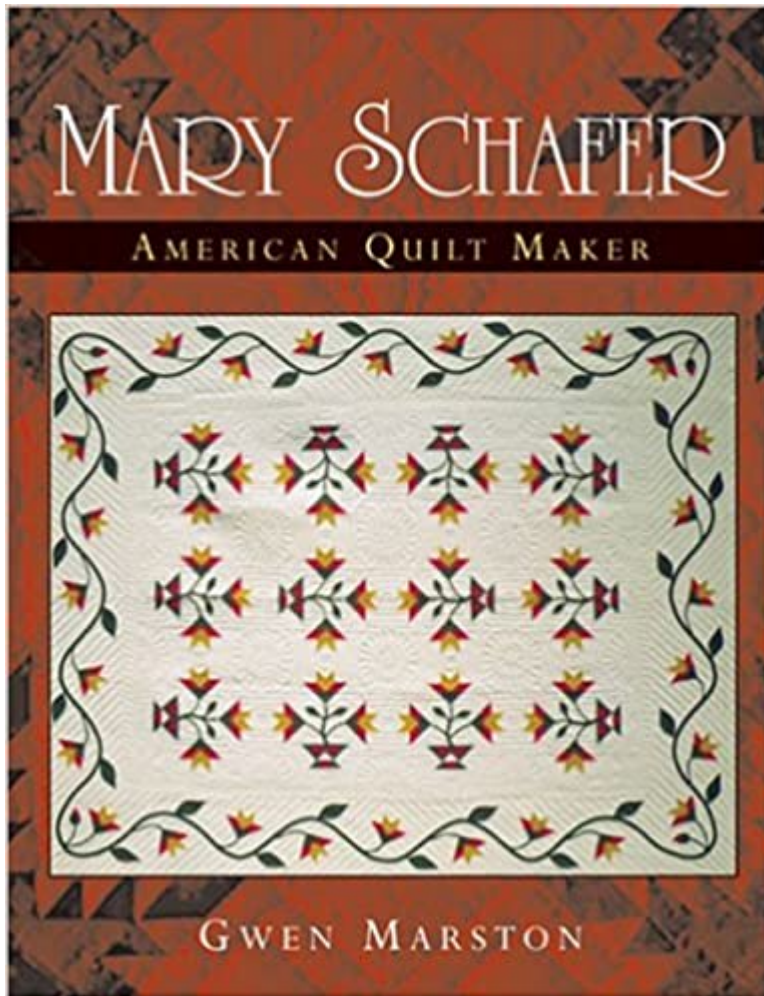
You may remember that I told you about the magazine article I purchased on eBay. Well, it arrived, and I can share it with you. First off, it cleared up a misconception I had: Hall actually had two, not one, periods of doll dressing. I wrote about her latter-day making of historical dolls, but she had an earlier period of making fashion clothes for 27-inch mannequins. I'm not sure whether/ how she used these dolls to promote her couture business, but they coincide with her dress-making career.

The magazine article is written by a doll collector who won several of Madam Hall's creation at an auction. Before the auction, the author read up on Carrie Hall; he learned all the facts I told you plus he found a weak clue that Hall had designed clothes for Susan B. Anthony. At the auction, he chose to bid on dolls that he thought were most representative of the fashion trends that Hall had written about in her book "From Hoopskirts to Nudity". Here's what he came away with (remember, these are 27 inches):



Some week, I want to take a side trip into the connection between fashion and quilting, but right now it's time to move on to Mary Schaefer. You can read her bio at the link below. You can also learn more from someone who knew and worked with Mary through these books, available on Amazon and many other sites.





Although Mary was trained in needle arts as a child, she didn't take up quilting until her forties. She bought a quilt kit (design unknown), but was daunted and returned it to the store. A few years later, she decided to try again, and made a Rhodendron quilt similar to this top (which I would have found daunting as well, but she persevered):



Rhododendron design by Progress Company

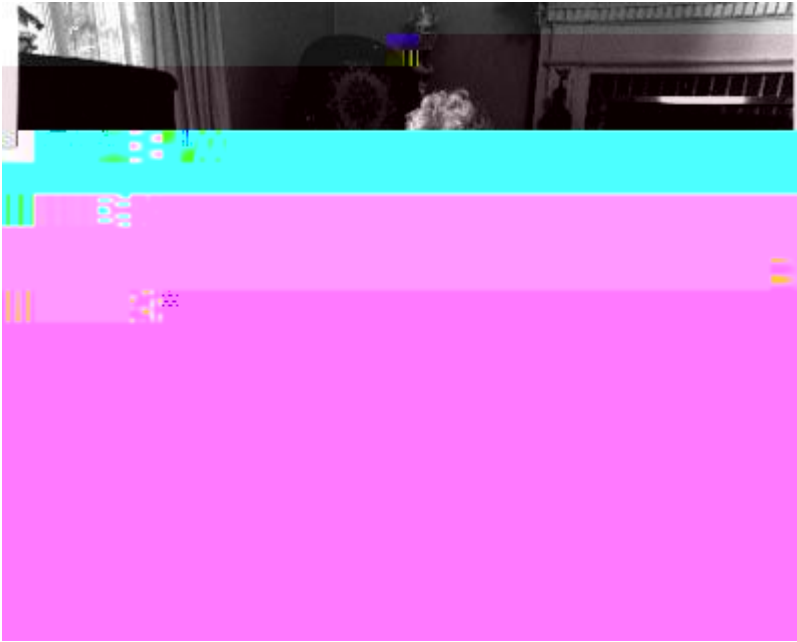
But Mary's real journey into the world of quilting and quilt history for which she is famous, came from restoring and then replicating an old quilt that her son had used at a beach party. That set her on the path of researching old quilt patterns and making copies of them. For example, Mary discovered a picture of this quilt in Florence Peto's "Historic Quilts" and she made a copy as a tribute to her. Peto wrote back (they were regular correspondents, and Mary also exchanged letters with Hall of Fame Honorees Joyce Gross

and Lenice Bacon) saying, "Do you know I have never seen another 'Lobster' quilt since the one pictured in *"Historic Quilts"*"; I am happy to know you are keeping the design alive." I, too, have never seen another "Lobster", so I question whether the design is still alive. Does anyone out there want to revive it?



Schafer, Mar. Lobster. 1969. From Michigan State University Museum, Michigan Quilt Project; Michigan State University Museum Collection. Published in *The Quilt Index*, <https://quiltindex.org/view/?type=fullrec&kid=12-8-440>. Accessed: 11/08/20

I usually include more photos from the Quilt Index when I write, but there are too many to choose from, so I'll suggest that you browse on the link below. Some of the quilts are made by Mary, some are ones she finished, largely with blocks and tops made by her pen pal, Betty Harriman, and some that Mary collected herself. Here's a photo from the Alliance for American Quilts showing Mary working on some of the odds and ends she preserved.



Michigan State University Museum acquired part of her collection—developed over a period of 40 years—of more than 200 quilts plus quilt tops, fabrics, and quilt blocks representative of most quilt styles and periods in American history. They have a traveling exhibit available for a fee if your guild is interested. The exhibit was shown at the Mercer Museum in Doylestown, PA a few years back, and it was visited by several bloggers (not me, sadly); check out their sites—links below— for some good views of Mary’s work.

The Quilters Hall of Fame has over a dozen blocks that are the result of Mary’s very active round robin participation, two quilts finished by Schafer and an unfinished partial quilt top. You can see these at the link below, but I also want to show you this quilt that Mary called “Single Chain and Knot.



Our Collections description says of the knot: "This design resembles a Pennsylvania Dutch fylfot." It could also be called a lauburu or Basque cross, a traditional celtic hooked cross with four comma-shaped heads. Today, Lauburu is a symbol of the Basque region of northern Spain.

should honor our work. She lived by the words of Marie Webster in *"Quilts: Their Story and How to Make Them"* : "To raise in popular esteem the most worthy products of home industry, to add to the appreciation of their history and traditions, to give added interest to the hours of labor which their construction involves..." I don't know about you, but sometimes that message gets lost for me—like when I'm bored from making 96 half square triangles—so it's good to have Mary Schafer to remind me that I'm engaged in a meritorious pursuit. Others will talk about the beauty of quilts (and Mary did as well) or the creativity involved, but sometimes it's enough to think about diligence and competence in the process. Yes! Thanks for that, Mary Schafer.

Your quilting friend,

Anna

Bio <https://quiltershalloffame.net/mary-schafer/>

Mercer Museum exhibit photos on Dawn's blog
<http://collectorwithaneedle.blogspot.com/2017/05/the-mary-schafer-collection.html>

Mercer exhibit on Triplett's blog
<https://www.quiltandtextilecollections.com/blog/the-mary-schafer-collection-a-legacy-of-quilt-history>

More Mercer photos
<http://www.quiltyhabit.com/2017/07/visit-to-mercercollection-mary-schafer.html>

Quilt Index, Mary Schafer Collection
<https://quiltindex.org/view/?type=specialcolls&kid=12-91-471>

Hall of Fame Schafer Collection
https://quiltershalloffame.pastperfectonline.com/webobject?utf8=%E2%9C%93&search_criteria=%22Mary+Schafer%22&searchButton=Search