

Remember Me...Stories about MN Quilters by Pat Cox and Martha Eaves



Bernadine Kaufhold

Bernadine has been a member of MQ since about 1981 but she was interested and doing quilting activities before that time. She was familiar with quilting because of her own grandmother Cecilia Koston (who worked in a fabric shop and brought home scraps to make her mother and siblings scrap quilts) and from her mother-in-law's mother Sophie Kreft, who had carefully saved both McCalls and Simplicity patterns of two different versions of Sunbonnet Sue. Neither Bernadine's mother nor her mother-in-law quilted!

Bernadine called upon these patterns to make two Sunbonnet Sue quilts, but because

she has two grand-daughters, she made both of them a set. From this beginning, Bernadine knew she had found her love of quilting, and now specializes in antique tops from the 1920's -1940's, which she finishes for family and sometimes for gifts.

Bernadine also likes quilt tops from the 1880's-1945, and also collects feed sacks and feed sack clothing (she has more than 1000 feed bags in her collection), as well as vintage fabrics which she can use to repair or finish the finds that makes from visiting antique stores and estate sales. She is very organized in her documentation of any quilts she works on, and has notebooks with the receipt of the tops or blocks that she purchased, the time she spent making the quilt, the picture of the final quilt, and as much information as she can gather about the original makers of the quilt she purchased. She sends a picture of the finished quilt to the seller, and sometimes this has resulted in the seller providing her with even more information about the quilt. In this way, Bernadine is both a quilt historian and a quilter.

She does all of her work by hand! This means she carefully washes the fabric in clear water, air dries it, cuts with a scissor, and takes her time with piecing, embroidering, and hand quilting. She loves the peacefulness of quilting, and recalls that when she was a "newbie", she met once per week with a group of quilters, including one of our founding mothers Nel Bredesen, and quilted every Friday. Bernadine's husband is very supportive of her love of quilting as he has his own hobby of collecting and fixing up Model T's. Interestingly, Bernadine says her quilting collection is probably more valuable than his 15 Model T's!

Pictured with her are the early Sunbonnet Sue quilts, along with the green fabric quilt "Periwinkle" from a box of vintage stars (the whole quilt has 1222 pieces and it took 744 hours of sewing and quilting to complete) and a beautiful "Prairie Stars", started by her husband's great grandmother Sophie. She keeps her collection of 140 quilts in pillow cases in her sewing room, along with her notebooks and other fabrics. She does not sell her work.

Her inspiration for her work is this: find something that you like to do and do it. If you are quilting old tops, gather as much information as you can find at time of purchase and do not be afraid to ask the shop owner or seller to help you. With old quilts, use good quality vintage fabric, and replace vintage fabric that is crumbling with vintage fabric from your stash if you want to repair the quilt. Try to avoid buying a quilt with lots of unstable fabric (of course, this is a rule you can break if you love it!) but be patient if you are looking for something special. It is probably out there. Enjoy the time you spend looking.