



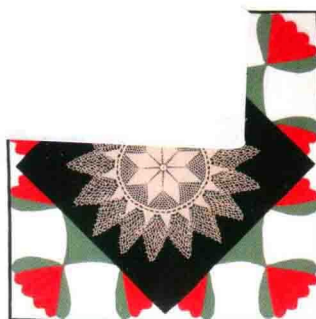
A Quilted Memory

Ideas and Inspiration for Reusing Vintage Textiles



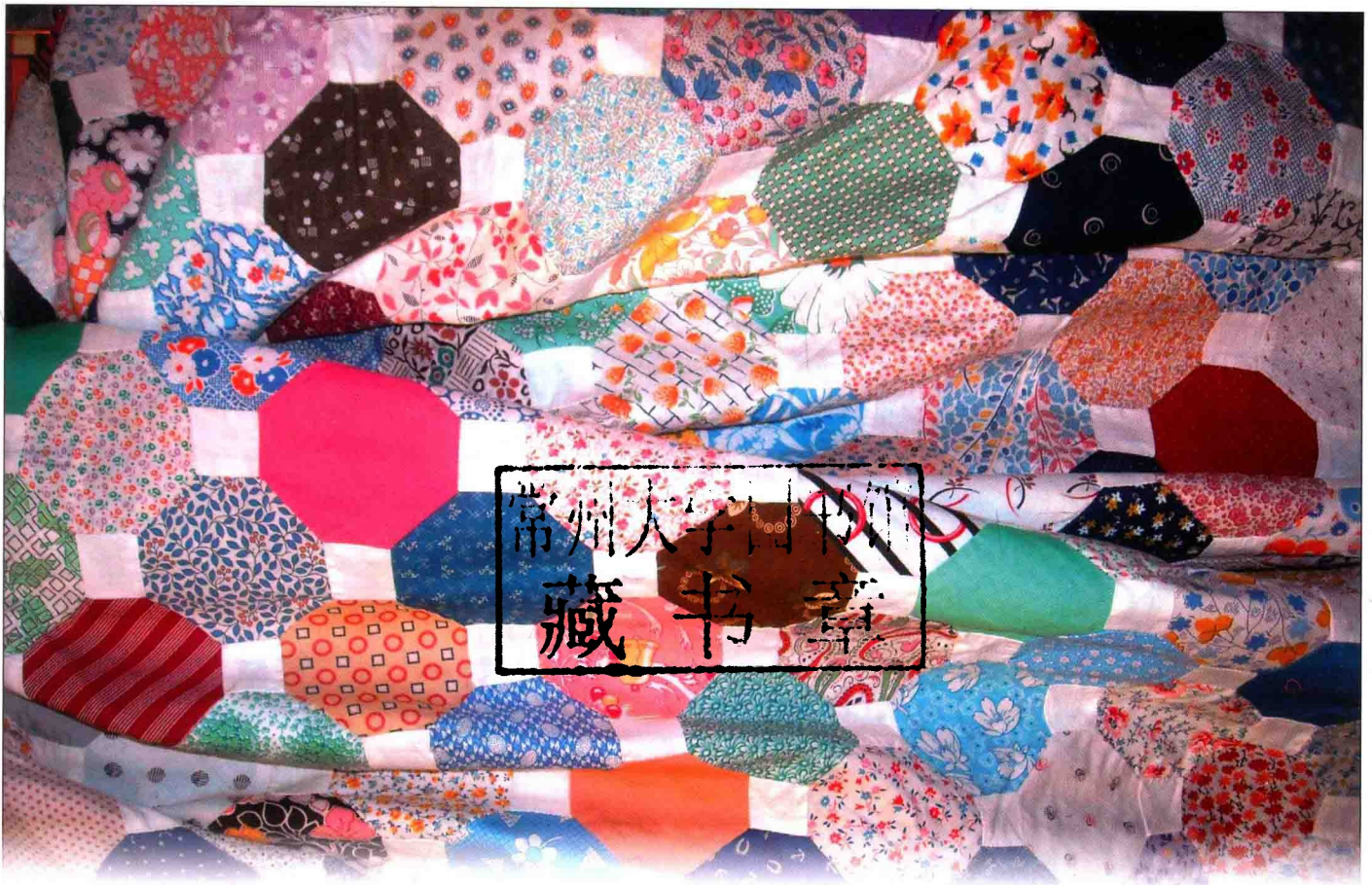
Schiffer

Mary Kerr



A Quilted Memory

Ideas and Inspiration for Reusing Vintage Textiles



Mary Kerr



4880 Lower Valley Road, Arglen, Pennsylvania 19310

Dedication

To my mother,
Corene Wilson,
my first and most patient teacher

Corene Crissie Say, 1953



Another Schiffer Book By The Author:

A Quilt Block Challenge: Vintage Revisited.
ISBN: 978-0-7643-3457-3. \$24.99

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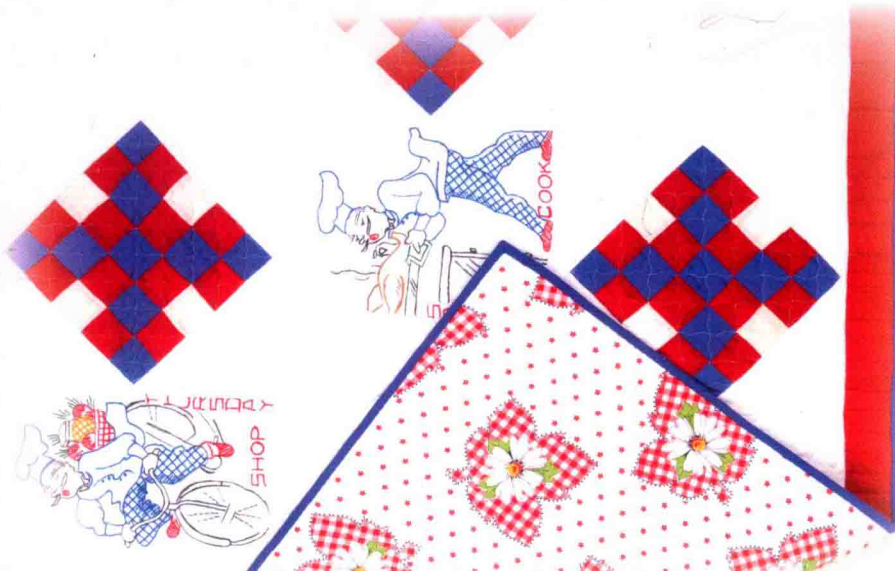
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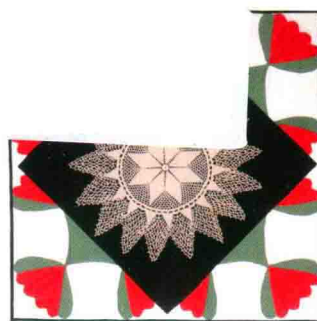
Contents

Acknowledgments	6
Introduction: My Inspirations	7
1. Kitchen Linens	11
2. Dresser Scarves and Embroidered Linens	24
3. Handkerchiefs, Doilies, and More	42
4. Clothing	51
5. Buttons and Stuff	61
6. Working With Vintage Fabrics	69
Labels and Documentation	74
Variations in Quilting.....	76
Epilogue	77
Professional Quilters	78
Index	79



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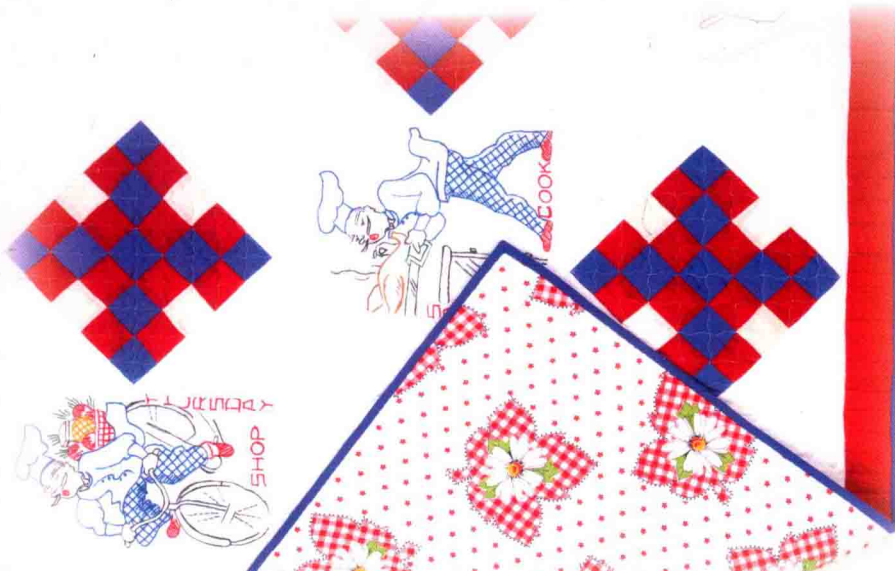
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Index	79



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reading the manuscripts in progress and helping to organize my thoughts. Thank you to my editor, Nancy Schiffer, and the staff at Schiffer Publishing, Ltd. for their encouragement and support.

Thank you to my mother, Corene Wilson, who spent hours going over all the family stories, photos, and linens. And last, but not least, thank you to my family and to the women in my life who serve as my army of cheerleaders. Life would not be the same without you!

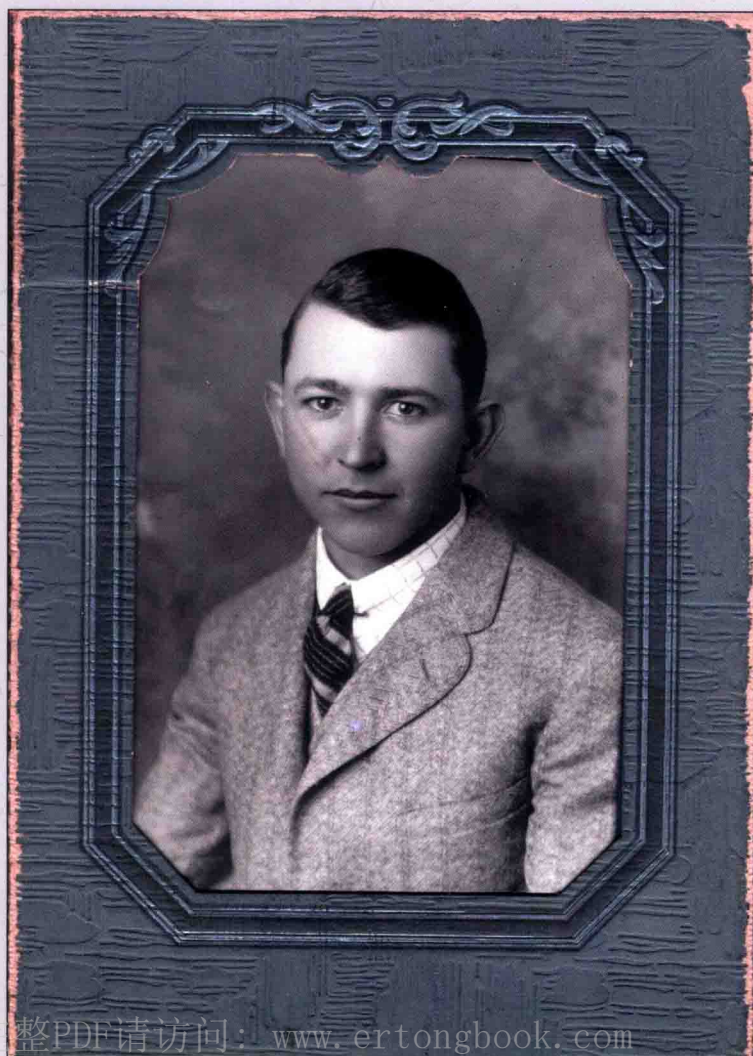
Detail of
Party Time
(page 36).



Introduction

Memories are what tie us to our past. They are those special thoughts that wrap us in the warmth of family, friends and cherished moments. For me, the smell of cookies baking takes me back to my grandmother's kitchen. The sound of a favorite hymn sends my sisters and me back to family music sessions with our Daddy. The warmth of a patchwork quilt reminds me of the generations of women who have cherished and cared for us through the years.

As women, we are in a unique position. If your family is anything like mine, we tend to be the keepers of the traditions, and the ones who remember the important dates. We pass along the stories, rituals, recipes, and experiences. We know the faces in the old photos and we are driven to share this information with our children. I want them to hear the stories and share in my memories.



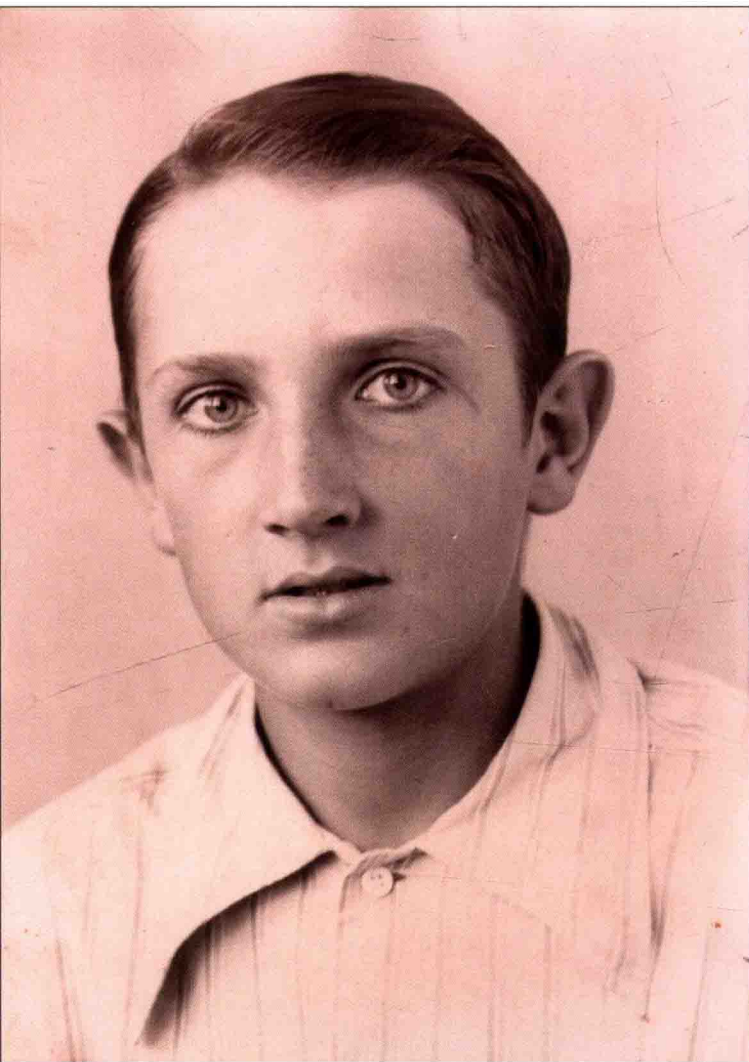
Henry Edmund Say, 1929

I am blessed to have grown up in a family of industrious women. Both of my grandmothers, my great-grandmothers, and my countless aunts were quilters. Those who did not quilt were accomplished needlewomen and their homes were full of embroidered linens, crocheted treasures, knitted scarves, and hand-work of every shape and size.

As these women have passed away, I have been given many pieces of their needlework. As the only grandchild from either side who followed a quilting path, I have been the proud recipient of most of their sewing ephemera, unfinished projects, damaged linens, and scrap bags. If someone did not know what to do with an item, it was passed on to me!

Over the years, I found myself with a large collection of family pieces that were never used but were kept safe in trunks, boxes, and drawers.

The women in my family were frugal. As did many people of their generation, they repaired damaged items, repurposed rather than purchased new, and saved everything! They were children of the Depression and "making-do" was a life-long habit. Dresses were remade, fabrics were recycled, clothes were patched to last another season, and nothing went to waste. In their textiles we find feed sacks, used clothing, drapery scraps, and remnants from the shirt factory where my grandmother worked.



James William Wilson, 1949



Jim and Allie Wilson, 1902



I challenged myself to apply this same “make-do” mentality to create memory quilts for my family. I had articles of clothing, dresser scarves, handkerchiefs, fragments of unfinished projects, and lots of buttons. What would happen if I incorporated these vintage pieces into my contemporary wall hangings? How wonderful would it be to liberate these pieces from their storage bins and allow them to shine in a new and exciting way? Wouldn't

the women who came before me smile to see their tradition of cherished recycling being passed on to a new generation?

With these quilts, I have found a way to save treasured textiles, honor their makers, and pass the stories on to my children and generations to come. I am thrilled to share my quilts in this book and I look forward to inspiring others to create their own Quilted Memories.



David and Nora
Cummins 1908

My Inspirations

Kathyrne Elizabeth Pickering Say (July 27th, 1912 - December 23, 2003) was born in 1912, the third girl born to a family of seven. At the age of 18, she married Henry Say, who immediately shortened her name to Kay Say! Together they raised three girls and were married 64 years. She was a jack-of-all-trades: a hard-working farm wife who supplemented the family income as a hairdresser, a cook, and a riveter during World War II.

My Grandma Kay had the unique ability to make each of her ten grandchildren feel they were the most important persons in her life. Every one of us is convinced to this day that we were her favorite child! From her I learned to appreciate quilts, family, a mean game of cards, pink Depression glass, and homemade strawberry jam. My daughter Katherine is her namesake.

Kay passed away in 2003 at the age of 92, after a long struggle with Parkinson's Disease. Her body was failing but her mind remained clear and her sense of humor was legendary. I loved being able to share my latest quilting project with her and see the delight in her eyes as she watched me play with her fabric. I was blessed to be able to spend time with her.

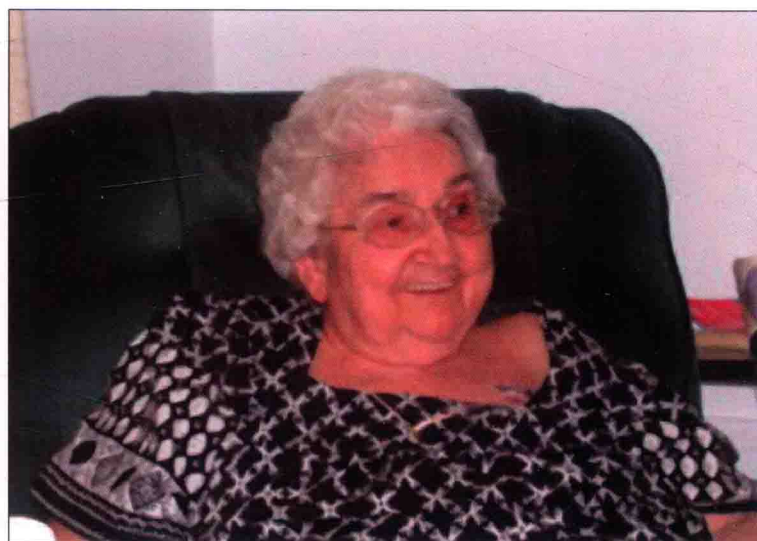
Minnie Opal Cummins Wilson (March 8, 1912 - August 15, 2007) was born in 1912, the thirteenth child in a large blended family. Opal left home as a teenager and worked in various homes, until she married Harry Wilson in 1932. They raised two sons in Linwood, Kansas.

My Grandmother Opal is the one who actually sat down and taught me to quilt. I thought I knew what I was doing and limped along with sometimes disastrous results. I remember making two baby quilts for my sisters in the late 1980s, that would not lay flat nor look like I needed them to. Grandma Opal came to visit and we dissected those two quilts and reconstructed them while we butted heads and attempted to be more stubborn than the other.

Opal made countless quilts and quilted for others during her long career. We have estimated that she worked on over 300 quilts in her lifetime and was actively quilting until 2005. She was a talented needlewoman who crocheted, knitted, tatted, and sewed clothes for more people than we will ever know. The image of her was taken at her 95th birthday, in March of 2007. Until the week before she died, she was working with her hands and making sure we all stayed in line.



Kay Say and Katherine Kerr 2002



Minnie Opal Wilson 2007

Chapter One

Kitchen Linens

A typical kitchen in the early to mid-1900s was full of linens. Tablecloths, towels, aprons and napkins were necessary items in any well-run kitchen. They filled the drawers and decorated the space. These linens were embellished with embroidery, paint, cut-work, and fancy edgings. They provided a utilitarian canvas for beautiful needle skills. As our society progressed into the 1960s, we entered a world of paper towels and

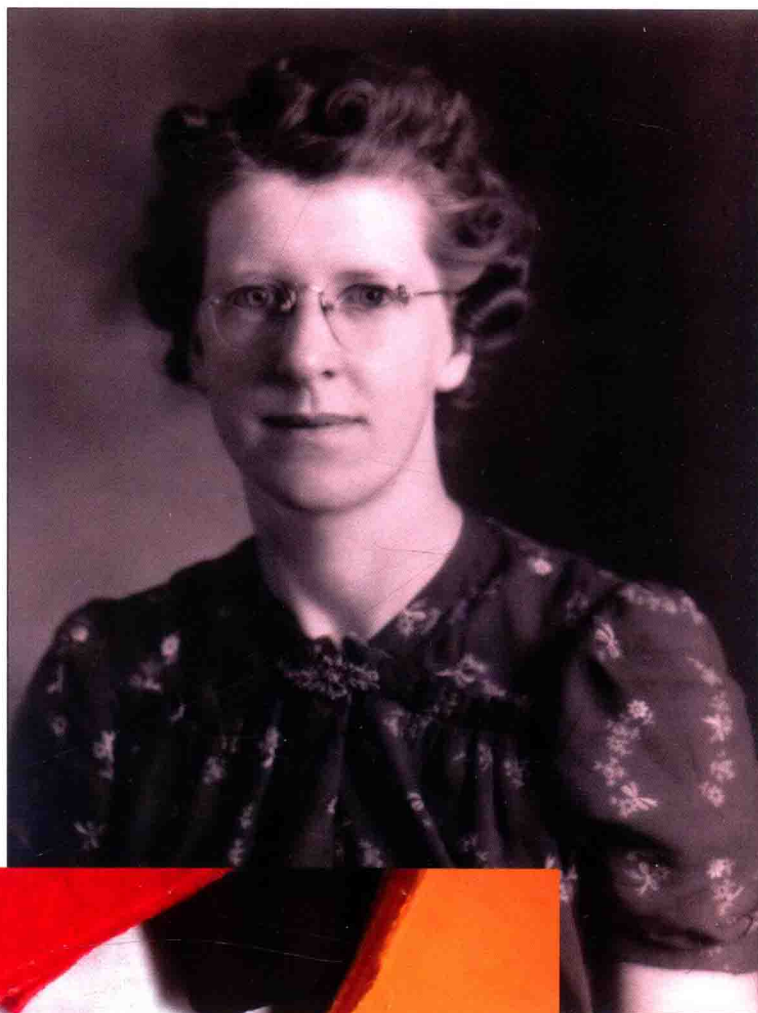
disposable napkins. The linens were put away: stored in trunks and closets. They were too pretty to dispose of, yet too archaic to continue using. Our current generation is now the fortunate recipient of this treasure trove of textiles. I choose to incorporate them into quilted creations and I challenge others to preserve their family memories by showcasing their treasured linens.



A Chicken from Wilsey

My Grandmother Kay created this wonderful painted tea towel that celebrated her love of chickens. She and my grandfather raised poultry; their barnyard was always full of feathered activity. Over the years, Kay collected dozens of ceramic and glass chickens of all shapes and sizes. I was not surprised to find this painted version in a box of linens from her estate. I paired this cheery towel with new black fabric and added fragments of a vintage star block from the 1890s.

Kay Say, 1931



Raw materials



32" x 32" Machine quilted by Shannon Shirley