



# SANGAMON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# HISTORICO

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## LOOKING AHEAD - A VISIT TO THE SUPREME COURT

In February members of the Sangamon County Historical Society will visit the Illinois Supreme Court Building as guests of the Supreme Court Marshal, Carolyn Taitt. We will meet at 7:00 P.M. on Tuesday, February 19, at the Capitol Avenue entrance of the Court Building (corner of Second Street and Capitol Avenue) where Mrs. Taitt will meet us and conduct a tour of the court rooms, attorneys' rooms, the library and her own Marshal's office. We will see the historic murals in the courtrooms of the Supreme Court and the Fourth District Appellate Court. Mrs. Taitt is the author of an article on these murals published in the Spring, 1984, issue of the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society. Refreshments will be served in the Marshal's office following the meeting.

Attendance for this meeting is limited to our own membership only.

Parking is available on the street (Capitol Ave.) and for that evening we may use the parking lot of the Attorney General's building (500 S. Second St.). The entrance to this lot is from a short one-way street (south to north) which runs between Jackson Street and Capitol Avenue, next to the railroad tracks. It is entered from Jackson Street which is one block south of Capitol. We are informed that the use of this lot is not advisable in very snowy or icy weather as it has some steep slopes. In the event of bad weather, street parking would be advisable.

Save Tuesday, March 19, for our 7:00 P.M. meeting in the Carnegie Room at Lincoln Library when we will hear Lincoln Land Community College professor Edwin R. Booher's presentation on the pioneer preacher, Peter Cartwright.

## A LOOK BACK - A "WARM" NIGHT IN JANUARY

On January 15 the Society met at Lincoln Library to hear Doris Krake speak on "Warm Quilts for a Cold Night." She was introduced by program chairman Polly Myers.

Quilts have an interesting history of their own going back hundreds of years. For example, one of the early uses of quilted material was for undergarments under heavy suits of

armor in medieval times. The number of quilts in a household also figured in a family's wealth and social standing. In the earlier days of our country when a girl had thirteen quilts she could be considered eligible for marriage, and a quilting party invitation for friends to help make a quilt featuring a "lovers'" design such as hearts and flowers was considered to be an engagement announcement!

A quilt is made up of three parts - a top, a batt (batting), and a backing, sewn together. The tops may feature piece work, applique or embroidery, and the stitches sewing them to the batts and the backing form the quilting. There are hundreds of designs for the tops - at least 5000 in the U.S. - as well as hundreds of patterns for the quilting stitches.

Quilts in the United States provide a unique record of our history. Even before women had the vote they could express with needlework their understanding of what was going on, both locally and nationally. One early quilt pattern was the "Pine Tree" block - expressing freedom in our young country no longer under the yoke of English kings. The pine tree, always green, keeping its needles in cold weather, stood for freedom from a government sometimes represented by the Royal Oak. In the colonies' days of battles during the Revolution a quilt block called "Burgoyne Surrounded" was designed to denote a victory over the British general. Mrs. Krake displayed a colorful quilt done in this pattern, with the blue quilt pieces representing the colonists surrounding the red pieces which stood for the British "Redcoats."

Immigrants to the U.S. developed patterns expressing their experiences, such as "Storm at Sea" and "Ocean Wave," and early homesteading activities were portrayed in patterns such as the "Log Cabin," made of small, straight pieces of fabric sewn together. Depending upon the arrangement of colors this pattern could be known by several names, such as a "Barn-raising" quilt, or others named the "Straight Furrow" or "Sunlight and Shadow." Many quilts had Biblical themes - Mrs. Krake has over 50 patterns depicting Bible references.

Admiration for Dolley Madison's years in the White House and her courageous action in saving state documents and a portrait of George Washington as the British invaded and burned the White House during the War of 1812 resulted in another historic quilt block pattern, "Dolley Madison's Star".

A "Fifty-Four Forty or Fight" block expressed the feelings of citizens in the 1840's who wanted the U.S. border with Canada established at that parallel. (It was later set at the 49th.) The "Whig Rose" block stood for the political party of that name (We Hope In God) in the mid-1800's, and the "Harrison Rose" memorialized William Henry Harrison's short one-month term as President before his death in 1841. Other quilt blocks representing historic eras or prominent citizens were the "Texas Star", "Little Giant" (for Stephen A. Douglas), "Underground Railroad", "Trail of the Covered Wagon", the "Barbara Fritchie Star," and the "Irish Chain". In the Victorian era the "crazy quilt" made of pieces of velvet, satin, silk and lace became popular. It was not to be used as a quilt on the bed, but was meant for afternoon siestas on the parlor couch. Elegant fans were in use, and a quilt block called "Grandmother's Fan" was a well-known design. Charm quilts, made with tops having no two pieces alike, were popular.

When an elegant White House wedding united 41-year-old Grover Cleveland and 21-year-old Frances Folsom, a new quilt block known as "Mrs. Cleveland's Choice" was designed.

From time to time quilting declined in popularity, as during the period when blankets and machine-made quilts reflected new trends, but revivals of this form of handwork occur at least every 50 years.. During the Depression days of the 30's interest in