

The Virtual Quilt

A Newsletter for Online Quilters

Issue 33 • July 1999



The Traveling Quilter

COAST TO COAST




Reports from [San Francisco](#) and [Washington, D.C.](#)

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The rotary cutter brings you back here! 

BUSINESS PROFILE:

QuiltCollector.com

If you've been paying attention at all, you know that auctions on the net are all the rage. Whether you're looking for Pez dispensers or multi-million-dollar Italian villas, you will find them available at eBay, Amazon, Excite, Yahoo, or some other site, yours for the bidding. There are also quilts available at these auctions, complete with photos and descriptions of their beauties and flaws, their known provenance, and estimates of their age. My daughter and I almost bid on one at eBay, but didn't go through with it. It was a very interesting 19th century signature quilt, well-described and photographed, and it finally fetched a good price. But we were uneasy about spending a considerable sum on a quilt we'd never seen or touched.

Now there's another option for quilt collectors who would like to bid for quilts both old and new online -- QuiltCollector.com. The site, at <http://www.quiltcollector.com> (what else?) specializes in quilt auctions and attempts to take the uncertainties out of the process. It was started by Mark Kriss of Palo Alto, whose background in both the fine arts and high-tech start-ups seems to have destined him for such a venture.

"In January 1999, I decided that auctions were the coolest thing happening on the Internet," Mark says. "and there seemed to be an opportunity to offer special-interest auctions such as quilts that would give quilt lovers higher quality and greater depth than the mass-consumer flea market-type auctions of eBay and the like. All in a more friendly, quilt-centric community."

Mark had exposure to the quilt market because his wife, Jane Holton Kriss (<http://www.janekriss.com>), is a signature designer for Northcott-Monarch's cotton fabric collections for quilters. They also had a friend, Diana Leone, with a major antique quilt collection she wanted to sell.

"Quilts seemed like an ideal match for an online auction," Mark says. "Quilters, unlike other artists, don't have many galleries or other established distribution channels where they can sell their wares, so millions of

would-be collectors often find it difficult to find quilters and purchase high-quality quilts. Plus, there's a large potential audience of quilt enthusiasts spread across a wide, and often remote, geographical area."

After determining that quilters were already very active on the web, Mark went ahead and set up the site. Quilt auctions are held each month for one week. The most recent one closed on June 26, with some 73 items up for auction.

To resolve questions of authenticity and to prevent misrepresentation, Kriss hit upon a unique solution. "Early on, we discovered the need for oversight from quilt experts to review auction listings for accuracy. This led us to establish the QuiltCollector Advisory Group. A key goal is to eliminate potential misrepresentation (intentional or otherwise) of the authenticity or physical condition of items offered for sale.

"A secondary goal is to give all participants an opportunity to learn more about quilt scholarship including valuations, appraisals and provenance." QuiltCollector.com's panel of experts serve as an independent watchdog group to review the site's offerings and raise concerns about any questionable items or claims.

Beyond the assurances of the advisory group, Kriss's site attempts to provide an experience that is less like a flea market and more like a professional auction house. He believes quilters prefer a friendlier, more quilt-centric community within which to buy and sell. "Check out our new and improved Auction Index, for example, which is now browseable by quilt style, date made, title, seller name, price and number of bids," Mark says. "This should help shoppers easily find what you're looking for vs. eBay/Amazon [which provide] very long lists that are not quilt specific or searchable by anything other than price and start/end date."

Knowing that quilters are tactile and like to touch the wares before buying, Kriss has found ways to overcome the remoteness of buying online. "No question that some things sell better on the net than others," he says. "And tactile items do pose a challenge. But we seem to be proving that if sellers provide sufficient information (including photographs) on their auction items and shoppers are given confidence boosting features such as ex-



pert review by an Advisory Board then it can work."

Having now experienced two auction cycles, Kriss continues to assess and refine his business model. " The biggest challenge now is getting better known. The business model can work if we can cost-effectively expand

our membership base. We are currently exploring and open to potential business partnerships which could help us do so."



<p>"3-D Pinwheels" LOT # bruder0603</p>  <p>Back to Auction Index</p>	 <p>PHOTOS</p>	<p>Abstract: TRADITIONAL PATTERN DESCRIPTION</p>  <p>ENTER AUCTION</p>
<p>DESCRIPTION BACK TO TOP</p>		
<p>SIZE:</p>	<p>Wall 30" W x 37" H</p>	
<p>DATE:</p>	<p>1997</p>	
<p>WHERE MADE:</p>	<p>Butler, WI</p>	
<p>CONDITION:</p>	<p>Mint: Unused</p>	
<p>HOW MADE:</p>	<p>Machine pieced, Machine quilted</p>	
<p>QUILTING:</p>	<p>Quilted-Thin</p>	
<p>QUILTER:</p>	<p>Donna Bruder (documented)</p>	
<p>ABOUT QUILTER:</p>	<p>I am a semi-self employed artist who picked up quilting about 6 years ago. I was born in Milwaukee, WI and have lived all over the USA. I worship at Believer's Fellowship in Pewaukee, WI and occasionally set up exhibits of my art in the church.</p>	

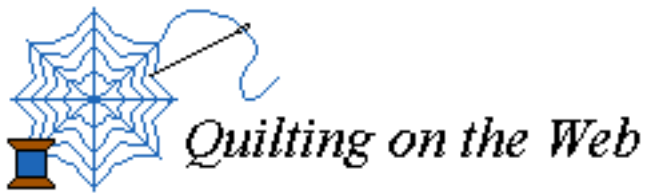
A partial screen shot of an example auction at Quilt Collector.

THE CRAFT CONNECTION

The Craft Connection (<http://www.craftconn.com/>) is the most exciting place on the Internet if you want to make or sell handcrafts. We sell quality cotton fabric, Mettler and Sulky thread, and quilting notions, all at a discount. Fabrics are linked to coordinating fabrics, so you know your choices will look great together. We try to find fabrics you won't see anywhere else. And we'll package them into packets of fat eighths, fat quarters, or 5" squares, so you can get a good variety without a big cash outlay. Among our fabric categories are florals, pictorials, and guy stuff, and you should see the new Lost Fabrics of Atlantis collection.

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Check out our Free Stuff. Each month we offer a new pattern and a new lesson. We also have a Calendar of upcoming Quilt Shows. Come by our website at <http://www.craftconn.com>.



1999 Quilt Sampler Websites

By Lynn Holland

Since its first issue in 1995, I have been a fan of Quilt Sampler magazine, an annual publication from the BH & G family, which features articles about extraordinary quilt stores. I was especially eager to see the latest issue, since I had recently visited Front Porch Quilts in Houston, one of this year's honorees. The official publication date is usually late May and the magazine is sold until August. However last year I waited until mid-June to find a copy and was politely told by salespeople at all the major quilt stores that they had been sold out for weeks. After coming up dry at the major news vendors in this city, I finally found a copy at Eckerd Drug. This year my favorite boutique, Kroger, had a copy the first week it was available and I snapped it up.

This year's stores are as wonderful and diverse as always, and some of the descriptions in the magazine prompted us to drag out the atlas to find out how close to Quilts by the Falls a bargain flight to Minneapolis would get us. Unhappily, most of us can't actually go to every store in the book. However, the internet has helped us get much closer to getting what we want when we want it, and one sign of the times is that this year every store in the Sampler listed a web site address. Since I am a huge fan of the virtual visit, I wandered off onto the web to explore some of the sites. As might be expected, the sites are as diverse as the stores themselves. Some of these web sites are in the developmental stages, while others are clearly old hands.

Material Possessions' page (<http://www.quiltessentials.com>) has been around for some time, as evidenced by its polished presentation. The home page has a huge picture of the QS cover, since



their original quilt is the cover girl for the issue. Add to that a well-executed tour of the store, good pictures of the eleven blocks of the month they offer (along with all the important details such as price and availability of "finishing" fabrics), and you have a feel for the personality of the store. Of particular note is a stunning stained glass block of the month constructed from hand-dyed fabric. Although Material Possessions does not offer online ordering as of this writing, it is in the works. They've just been a little busy doubling the size of their store in California.

Another one of my favorite sites is the Calico Cat (<http://www.thecalicocat.com>), and not just because of the great name and cat graphics. This site, too has super BOM's, including some nice folk art choices and a sawtooth cat selection that truly tempted me. The Calico Cat also offers funky doll patterns and notions, including some fantastic colors of New Zealand mohair for the perfect doll hairdo.

Heart and Hand Dry Goods (<http://www.heartandhand.com>) cleverly offers regional gifts and patterns on the website, along with clear pictures and descriptions of the available goods.

Although Quilts by the Falls (<http://www.cannon.net/~quilts/>) offers a very simple site with some great graphics, at this point it seems geared more to in-person customers. I was taken by the invitation to "come for the quilts, stay for the cookies" that accompanies information about their Piecemaker's meetings that occur five times a month. These folks know how to appeal to people! This page has an overall friendly ambience and appearance that makes you hope that they expand the site soon to perhaps offer patterns and other

stuff.

As has been previously mentioned in TVQ, Front Porch Quilts (<http://www.frontporchquilts.com>) seems a very comfortable presence on the web. They have a fun, but not too slick assortment of places for your eye to fall, but the pages include their newsletter, the class schedule for the quarter, blocks of the month and special offers as well. Having been to Front Porch Quilts actually and virtually, I can verify that the site is a good representation of the shop itself.

The Quilt Foundry (<http://www.quiltfoundry.com>) website has to be one of my favorites, just because it packs so much personality and individuality onto its pages. The home page looks like a great big pinetree quilt (the store's symbol) with click-on buttons that take you to other places on the site. There's a cyber tour with beautiful pictures, (including a good shot of the 100-year-old beam that hold up the walls), thumbnail sketches of the four partners who own the business and very clever text to accompany the long list of special services that

the store offers. This is very polished site and definitely worth the "trip" to check it out.

As I mentioned earlier, all ten featured stores in this year's Sampler have websites, but I didn't think it would be fair to review those sites that are truly in the fledgling stages, so I've restricted my comments to those that are beyond the beginner stage on the web. However, some of the developmental sites already have the right idea, with nice photos and graphics enticing us to "watch this space." One of the sites offers the shop newsletters online, something I think adds tremendous appeal, and an inducement to check back periodically. All of these stores are experts in marketing, so I'm sure exciting internet action will quickly evolve. Since quilters are creative by nature, it won't be long before all the stores are comfortable with virtual visitors dropping by for a cup of tea and a few yards of fabric which we place in our shopping cart. Now if we can just work on our recipe for cyber cookies that taste good.



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The Traveling Quilter

Two San Francisco Quilt Shops, and a Bonus

By Lynn Holland

Having never before visited San Francisco, I really didn't know what to expect. So when I had the opportunity to attend a conference there, I arrived with little more than some stereotypical images and a burning desire to check out at least one quilt store. After a somewhat harried ride from the airport (sharing a shuttle with persons from four different countries but no air-conditioning), I sat in my hotel room with my Quilter's Travel Companion and a MUNI public transit map. Since I am a dreadful map-reader, I was thankful that the persons at the MUNI hotline were used to tourists who have no idea where anything is. They gave me precise instructions on how I could navigate the town.

Because I was there on business, my quilting adventures were necessarily limited to lunch breaks and after-conference hours. Luckily, one of the main stations was a two-minute walk from my fabulously situated hotel. At lunch break on Sunday, I hopped the rapid transit and ten minutes later was at the door of **Black Cat Quilts** (2608 Ocean Avenue, Phone: (415) 337-1355).

In a pleasant neighborhood, Black Cat puts its emphasis on both cats and quilts, and the resulting mix is most pleasant. Yes, there is a black cat at the shop, and judging from my brief stay, Miss Kitty (her real name) is queen of the store. Among the more unusual items in stock is a sponge that removes pet hair. There are cat mugs, cat wall hooks, cat clocks, cat plates and a "kitty corner" devoted to (of course) strictly cat fabric. As you might expect, there is a nice selection of Oriental fabric, but there is also the surprise of cuts from Amsterdam, which are exclusive to Black Cat quilts in this country.

The store is open and airy, and although there is a good selection of fabric, books and notions, nothing is cluttered. There is a nice nook for children with Discovery-toy type items offered to help them pass the time.

The store has a very personal feel, emphasized that afternoon by the presence of two customers, one an experienced quilter and the other embarking upon her second quilt, but her first rotary cutting experience. The novice quilter was trying to decide how long her quilt would take to make, since her hand pieced first effort was completed during the six weeks she was confined to bed after surgery!

Classes at Black Cat include not just the expected hand and machine selections, but fabric fortune cookies, an unusual sweatshirt jacket and classes on how to service your Featherweight. I was really impressed when among the visiting teachers was Doreen Speckmann!

Although after visiting the shop I didn't have time to eat, there is an Ambrosia bakery and deli across the street from Black Cat, just in case you need to refuel.

Since my foray into SF on public transit had been so successful on Sunday, I set off late the next afternoon on the bus to **Mendel's**, located in Haight-Ashbury (1556 Haight Street. Phone: (415) 621-1287). First, let me say that generally I am not a timid person. I work in inner city Atlanta and have an opportunity to interact with all kinds of people every day. I also ride public transportation regularly. But this really did not prepare me for the adventure I was about to experience. Yes, I was in college in the sixties, but have never been into the tie-dye scene, unless you count the socks I made on the stove top with those dye-infused cords about ten years ago. Anyway, I hopped the bus on Market Street, and off I went.

I should have been tipped off when two of my fellow passengers had tattooed everything and matted hair. If not, perhaps the infuriated pedestrian who slammed the bus repeatedly with his skateboard and screamed obscenities at the driver should have given me a clue. Or surely, the four-letter-word war between the riders on two different buses should have convinced me that I should not have tried this alone. But I was too far into the trip to not at least get off the bus at the appointed



stop and visit the store I had come to see. Although by this time I was pretty close to creeped out, I picked my way through the folks who seemed permanently camped out on the sidewalk, past the somewhat unconventional retail parlors and found Mendel's.

This little wonderland is loaded with fine art and craft supplies as well as fabric. Although they ask that you leave your bags and backpacks at the door, the well-pierced clerk sweetly let me hold on to my belongings. The hodgepodge fabric area is up a couple of wooden steps, tended that day by someone swathed all in purple, from headdress to beyond her toes. Truly a time-warp place, the selection ranged from mudcloth to velvet, with cloth of all nations and a few places that don't appear on any map in between. I'm sure it is the supply source for many of the theatrical productions in this town, and some other stuff, too. It was quite a show in and of itself, with a huge button and trim selection, stationery and stickers and lots of stuff everywhere, not to mention a varied clientele, from society types to cross-dressers. Even taking my somewhat unsettling ride into consideration, Mendel's is worth the trip, although I would not go there again by myself, and would not recommend doing so unless you are the type of person who is put off by absolutely nothing. And I mean **nothing**.

For those of you into the virtual visit, check out their cool web site at <http://www.mendels.com>. This is a really nice family business, and I wish I had seen the

website before I made my trip into Haight-Ashbury. The family photos and whatnot lead you to expect chicken soup, not the hallucinogens I was imagining on my surrealistic bus ride. But, as is mentioned in the text on the website, this **IS** San Francisco.

A nice little bit of serendipity came my way in Union Square as I was searching for a Giants shirt at Macy's. Across the street is **Britex fabrics**, announced by an old-fashioned neon display. Beneath the sign are five floors of fabric, fabric and fabric. The sales clerks are **very** knowledgeable and obviously used to dealing with people who know nothing about fibers. One patient clerk gently steered a lady with an elaborate period costume pattern away from a heavy busy floral toward something more suitable for the tucks and gathers of this very detailed outfit. Another did not even flinch as a customer inquired if the \$55/yard silk upholstery fabric was machine washable!

Britex carries such far out stuff as fabric covered with silk flowers for over \$100 a yard, but they also have your basic cottons in all colors of the rainbow. Customers of all nationalities were there the day of my visit, and Britex appears able to cater to almost any fabric need you can imagine.

For someone who had no particular desire to go to San Francisco, my business trip turned into a multi-faceted and multi-cultural adventure. The quilt shops definitely shared in the local color!



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The Traveling Quilter

Inspiration in Washington D.C.

All I wanted was dinosaurs and quilts.

My husband Chris and I went to Washington D.C. last month on vacation. We'd both been before, and visited all of the various monuments, so this trip was all about the museums. Specifically, I wanted to spend all of our time in the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History and National Museum of American History.

So with all of this walking around museums planned, I suppose it was inevitable that I should sprain my ankle the very first day, gawking as we passed the Supreme Court Building.

No matter, there is plenty in D.C. to distract one from such mundane concerns.

One of the first stops was the American History Museum. After a strangely fascinating trip through the history of computers, which I heartily recommend, we headed for the textiles exhibit on the third floor.

On first sight, it was smaller than I expected. The museum has a wonderful website, with an extensive online textiles exhibit (<http://www.si.edu/nmah/ve/quilts/quilt.html>). From the number of items exhibited online,

I'm afraid I expected a larger physical exhibit.

Upon reflection, though, I decided this was a pretty smart way to arrange things. Many more people get to see the quilts on the website than could ever visit the museum. The items on display in the museum can then be rotated from the entire collection, so that no one piece is exposed the damaging lights (and camera flashes) for too long of a time.

The museum exhibit made up in quality anything it was missing in quantity, anyway. The very first piece I saw was the "Pocahontas Quilt", an album quilt done by Pocahontas Virginia Gay, a 7th generation descendant of the Native American princess Pocahontas. Each block is appliqued and embroidered. Many feature historical figures such as president Andrew Jackson or the original Pocahontas. Other show farm animals, or puppies and kittens or birds. Some are simple, others have a scrappy, crazy quality. One is a signature block, with a large cursive embroidered "P. V. Gay". Altogether, it showcases a slice of American life at the time.

There were also several more traditional quilts and other needlework items on display. If you are in the D.C.



The textiles exhibit at the Smithsonian Museum of American History.

area, you owe it to yourself to pay the National Museum of American History a visit. You may find specific inspiration for a project, or, like me, you may simply be reminded of the historical context of whatever you're working on now. If one of your quilts is on display in a museum one hundred years from now, what will people see in it?

It turns out, though, that the exhibit in the Museum of American History is only the beginning of what Washington D.C. has to offer the visiting quilter. I recommend the Museum of Natural History as a second stop.

So many of us draw on the natural world around us for quilting inspiration. It is next to impossible for a quilter to walk away from the diversity of nature gathered at the Smithsonian without a new idea or several.

I headed first to the Hall of Dinosaurs. Dinosaurs are an odd obsession of mine. I have to admit, I wasn't thinking of quilts at all when we arrived at the Museum of Natural History.

After you explore the Hall of Dinosaurs, though, if you walk upstairs, you find yourself suddenly at the Hope Diamond and the Hall of Gems. I guess I knew, intellectually, that gemstones come in every color of the rainbow and every conceivable shape. The Hall of Gems exhibit brings this point home in a new way.

I found one idea there I think is pretty cool. There was a display case highlighting the range of color in gemstones, and they had nearly everything, from the brightest yellow sulfur to the deepest red ruby, arranged according to color. So I said, "Wouldn't that make a great quilt?" Whereupon my husband declared me a hopeless fanatic.

Seriously, though, wouldn't it? It could be an album quilt, with a different mineral in each square, arranged by color as they were in the museum. Or maybe it should be a more abstract design, pulling in the full range of both color and shape.

There were many moments like that on this trip. If you ever feel the need for new inspiration, a trip to the Smithsonian will probably cure your ills.

At the moment, the Smithsonian is also hosting a special exhibit at the Museum of Natural History: "The Spirit of the Ainu". The Ainu are a Japanese people from the far north, and the exhibit is full of fascinating information about their history and culture.

There are also accomplished fabric artists among the Ainu. To begin with, I was intrigued by the delicate ceremonial clothing. Then, I found Noriko Kawamura's



Goodies galore! The textiles section of the Museum of American History's gift shop.

work. As the exhibit director, Kitty Dubreuil, says of Kawamura, "she takes Ainu subject matter, already abstract, and pushes it to the next dimension of abstraction and makes these incredibly stunning and exciting wall hangings." If you like, you can read more of the director's comments about the exhibit in "Ainu: The Anatomy of an Exhibit" at <http://www.mnh.si.edu/arctic/html/ainu.htm>.

The Kawamura pieces caught my eye at once. The first is a dramatic work in blues and reds called "Kamuy: Spirit of Ainu" (1998). The effect is of a wave or an ocean wrapping around a swirling ball of dancing fire.



"Kamuy: Spirit of Ainu" (1998) by Noriko Kawamura

The other, called "Wooden Spirit" (1991), is displayed among the carved wood pieces. It is itself reminiscent of carved wooden columns, done in rougher fabrics in muted browns and blues. Both pieces made me want to know more about the Ainu people. In addition, both provided inspiration for what amazing things can be done with a wide range of fabric types and colors.

Eventually, I thought I had reached the limit of quilting in D.C. museums. I was wrong, of course. I went with Chris to the Library of Congress and to the Folger Library of Shakespeare. Then we found our way to the Sackler Gallery of Asian Art. In that museum's gift shop I found a small holiday ornament. It's a cube, and on each face is a reverse appliqued star. A small slip of paper with it informed me that these ornaments are made by the Hmong hilltribes residing in tree top villages in northern Thailand and in Laotian refugee camps. Evidently they are renowned for their reverse applique and cross-stitch. That's another thing I'm going to have to find out more about now.



Wooden Spirit" (1991) by Noriko Kawamura

The ornaments were lovely, and of course I had to buy one. Chris and I had a rule on this trip, to cut down on baggage: only buy items in gift shops that you can't find anywhere back home. So naturally, as we sat down to rest outside the Sackler, I discovered that the distributor of these ornaments is in St. Pete Beach, Florida - all of about 10 miles from our home. Oh well, at least I know where to buy more!

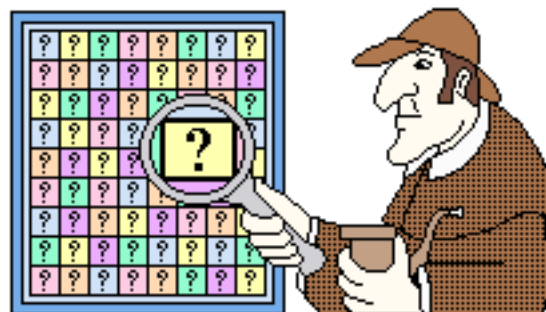
All in all, our trip to Washington D.C. was fascinating and fun. I found quilting all around me, and inspiration was around every corner. I'm already looking for an excuse to go up there again soon.

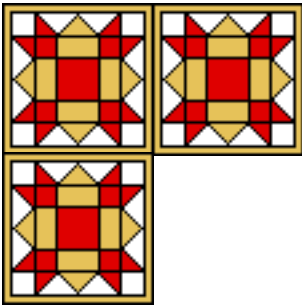


Is the web a mystery?

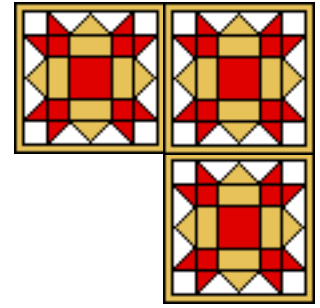
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QUILTER PROFILE DEAN NEUMANN



O.K., so we're cheating this issue. Dean Neumann is not a quilter. He is, however, a computing quilter's best friend. He's the man who invented and programmed the extremely popular quilt design program "The Electric Quilt," also affectionately known as EQ.

Dean has been a hard man to catch up with. We tried to interview him a few months ago, but he was in the throes of completing programming of version 4.0 of EQ. Being a perfectionist, he couldn't give the time and care to the interview that he wanted, so we postponed it. Now that EQ is happily on the street and selling well, Dean has graciously provided us the answers to our questions.

Over the years, The Electric Quilt program has grown in more ways than one. The program itself has matured from a primitive DOS-coded "toy" into a powerful Windows 95 tool. As a business it has grown as well, so that now it involves Dean's entire family (along with several employees) in some or all aspects of producing, advertising, and distributing their growing line of products.

Dean's wife, well-known art quilter and TV personality Penny McMorris, is not only the main "front-lady" for the company, but she was also the inspiration for the creation of the program. Dean talks about the role she and others in their family played in the program's

beginnings:

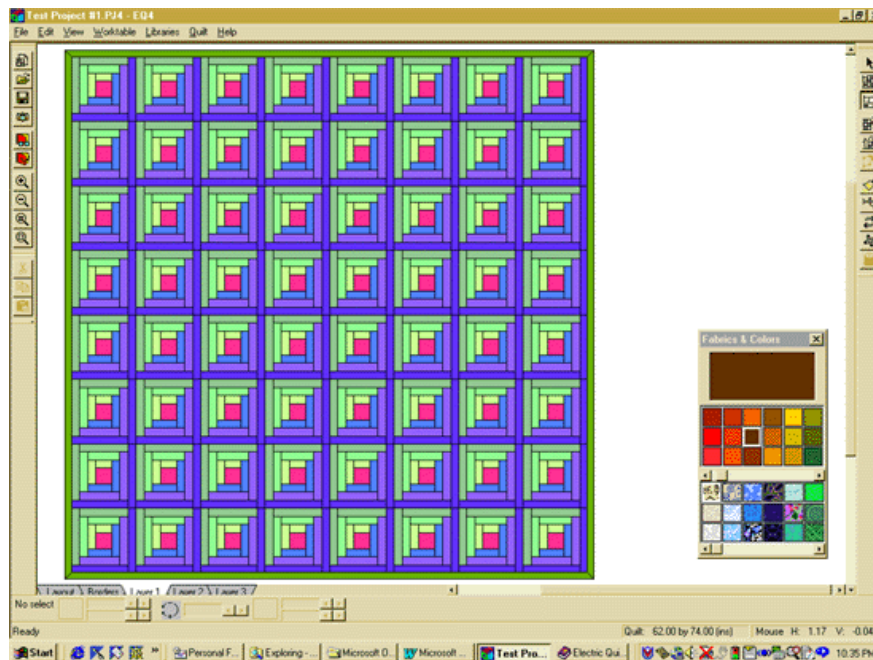
"After hanging out with Penny for a few years I'd seen a lot of quilts, and I had really started to love them. As a mathematician I had always been interested in geometry and so quilt design appealed to me quite naturally. Also, I had met most of the best quilt artists and so I had seen a lot of the best work out there.

"At some point my son, Tim, gave me a hand-me-down computer. I was really sucked into programming because it was so much like doing mathematics, except more fun. It just occurred to me one day to write a quilt design program. Two years later, in 1991, it was finished.

"Why a quilt program? It's difficult to design a quilt, since you can't really visual-

ize it until you go through the long difficult process of making it. I thought that a design program was going to release the artist that's in every quilter because it would make it possible for them to see the quilt on-screen. Some people can see a design in their mind's eye before they cut the fabric, but for everyone else a quilt program ought to be a terrific tool."

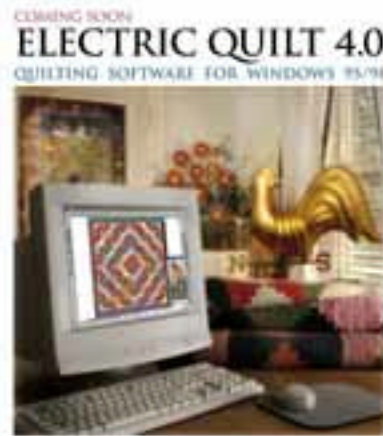
Today's EQ is a terrific tool, but it didn't become that overnight. "EQ1 was a very simple program," Dean says. "It just dealt with straight lines, and it didn't even support a mouse. But we were happy to find that a lot of



The screen that computing quilters have come to love.

quilters liked it, even back then. . . . Some of our first users are still with us, and when we see them at trade shows we laugh about how they used the arrow keys to draw quilt blocks in EQ1.

"We started the business in our house. I remember how surprised we were when calls began coming in while I was still finishing EQ1. (We had demonstrated a beta version briefly, without naming it, on an episode of Penny's TV show, *The Great American Quilt*.) Penny's oldest daughter, Erin, was home then, and said she planned to move to San Francisco when we had 100 people on our mailing list, and that seemed a lot to us."



Designing and programming a major drawing program of any kind is an arduous undertaking, and it was made more difficult for Dean by evolving standards in the computer world. In the early '90s Windows was emerging as a major platform and the rate of change in the industry was accelerating.

"When I started version 2.0, I felt Windows still didn't have the performance needed for a quilt design program, so I decided to stick with DOS," Dean says. The new version was a quantum leap over the first one, and included mouse support and a growing number of sophisticated features, including block libraries and new drawing tools.

"I finished EQ2 in 1994. Then I did BlockBase, a computer version of Barbara Brackman's *Encyclopedia of Pieced Quilt Patterns*. I had admired Barbara Brackman ever since finding the early self-published copies of Brackman's encyclopedia (now available from AQS). I have always loved the idea of collections, in this case having all the pieced blocks in the entire world (no longer true, of course), so this project was really great fun." BlockBase was an extremely popular program which is now out of print. A new Windows-based version is in the works for later this year.

With BlockBase finished, it was time to look at EQ again, and to again face the quandary of Windows vs. DOS. Dean says: "After BlockBase, we had accu-

mulated a number of requests for additional features in EQ3. And we decided it was more important to add features than it was to switch to Windows. That may have been a mistake. But at the time it seemed to be the right thing to do, since we weren't having problems (those came later, with the newer Windows-only printers), and we had a loyal group of users eagerly wanting to do more with the program. They were asking for features such as curves in EasyDraw, applique, numbering foundation patterns, overlaying applique and quilting. So we stuck with DOS"

Mistake or not, the intervening years had brought new competitors into the field of quilt design software and it was clear that Windows was the platform of choice. So with EQ4, released this past spring, The Electric Quilt at long last made the transition. Deans says it liberated him: "Now that I'm programming Windows, I really love it. Windows does so much for programmers. In EQ3 I had to make every button myself. In EQ4, all I had to do was tell Windows to make a button, and it draws it. This gives you time to concentrate on the things that are really quilt-related such as improving the algorithm that lets us figure out the numbering system for paper pieceable blocks, and the algorithm that converts lines and arcs into patches in EasyDraw. The Windows development tools are terrific."

While the Windows-based community was happy with the continuing stream of new products, Macintosh users felt somewhat left out. Dean and the company made some attempts to create a Mac version of EQ early on,

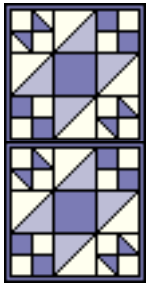
but these efforts met with disappointment and were finally abandoned. Dean says "Our reason for not having a Mac version is fairly simple: we think Mac users really want a Mac version written specifically for the Mac, not a converted PC program. We are really trying to concentrate our efforts on what we do best -- and that is writing and



supporting PC programs. Just keeping up with one operating system, the needs and wants of our users, and

the growing list of projects we want to do, is more than full time for everyone on our staff. We think we'd be spreading ourselves too thin to try to support both operating systems."

The latest programs developed by the company are Sew Precise! and Sew Precise! with Shirley Liby, stand-alone Windows products that create foundation paper piecing patterns for use by quilters. Dean says "Since



“Our users are always a step ahead of us in what they'd like Electric Quilt to do.”

we had produced BlockBase years before, many people had asked us to do something similar with paper pieceable blocks. It's been really popular, probably because it's so easy to use."

With a stable of successful products on the market, Dean and company are not resting on their laurels but are hard at work on new goodies for computing quilters. A fabric disk to go with EQ is in the works, as well as the new version of BlockBase. The company has always had a very open relationship with its users through a variety of media and has sought user input actively. Asked what feature has been most asked-for by users, Dean says "Before EQ4, the most requested feature was importing scanned fabrics. Now that EQ4 allows users to import pictures for fabrics and tracing, things seem to

be quiet for the moment. We're going to be implementing a 'wish list' survey page on our web site (<http://www.electricquilt.com>) to help us keep track of users' wishes. One thing is certain, our users are always a step ahead of us in what they'd like the program to do." EQ users also provide ideas and seek help through Planet Patchwork's popular Info-EQ mail list, which now has 2,200 members (<http://planetpatchwork.com/info-eq.htm>).

The company's web efforts have also matured over the last several years. EQ's first website was pretty much home-made and had a friendly feel. EQ the Mouse was your host, offering up product information and a special EQ-oriented mystery quilt. Recently the company obtained its own domain and has hired professionals to modernize and upgrade the site. EQ the Mouse is less visible, but still around, and the site offers a number of useful forums and features for EQ users.

As a pioneer in the computer quilting world, Dean has a unique vantage point from which to contemplate how far we've come: "It's been a long, slow road to actually integrate computers and quilting, " he says. "Only the really technically forward-looking quilters have even wanted to consider using a computer to design with. Recently, though, it seems to have been gaining considerable momentum. Obviously the Internet is a huge factor because quilters are naturally interested in sharing. That's characteristic of quilters in general. So I think the Internet will play a big role in popularizing computers for quilters."

Whatever the future of computers in quilting may be, we can be sure that Dean Neumann and The Electric Quilt Company will also continue to be a huge factor.



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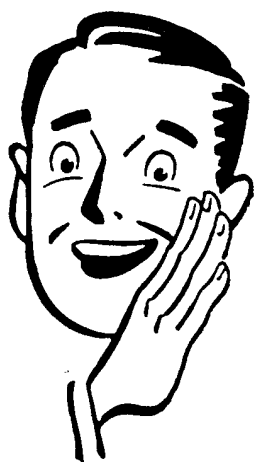
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We'd like news of new classes starting up to teach quilt design on computers, or new approaches to that teaching. New products, maillists, World Wide Web pages, etc., are all fair game, and we'd appreciate any tips you can provide. Send your tips by e-mail to <mailto:rholland@atlanta.com>.

If you have a comment about an article, a complaint or a correction, we're glad to hear that, too, and may publish some comments as letters to the editor. Again, these may be sent to rholland@atlanta.com.



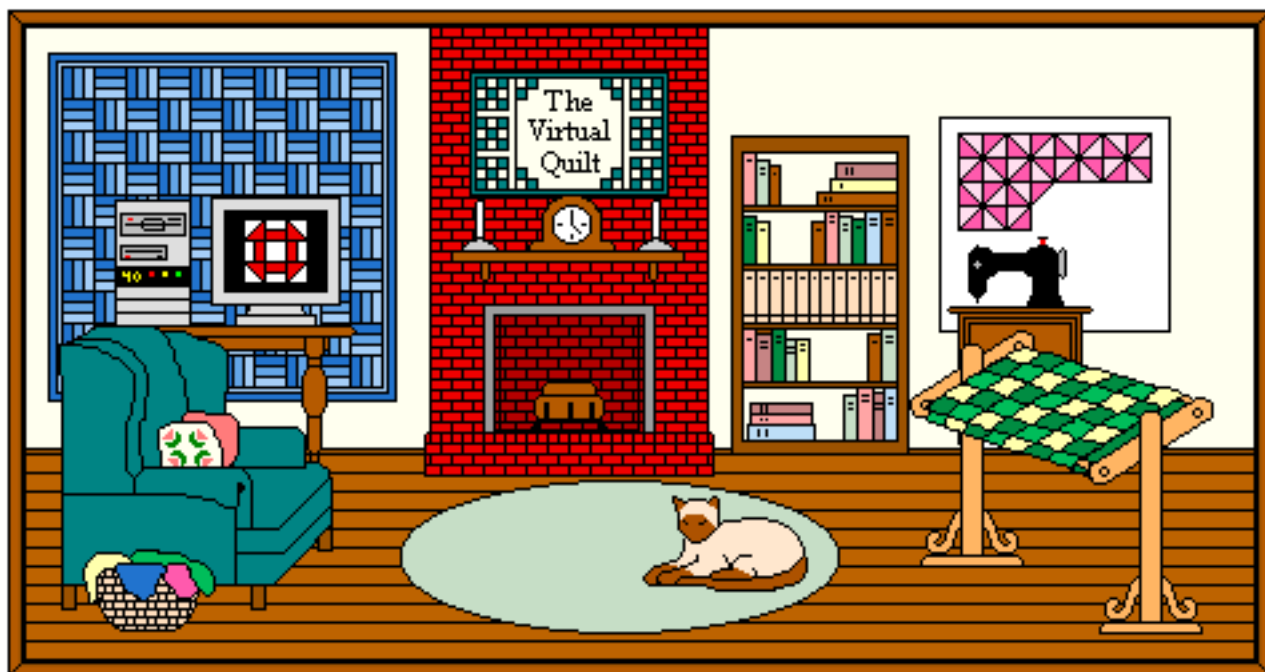
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A Newsletter for
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