

HEIRLOOMS: Quilts offer a link to the past for Sisters woman

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my aunt Mary passed away in 2004 when she was 100 years old," Childress said. "Mother and Daddy had some of Grandmother's quilts, but just not the prettiest ones. Aunt Mary had the nicest quilts, and she kept them rolled up in muslin bags for years in a drawer."

But there are two very fragile utilitarian quilts made mostly of wool that Childress inherited from her dad that she keeps at home.

"The quilts are not in great shape and must have been used over and over to keep the family warm," Childress said. "I remember Daddy (who died in 1987) telling me about life on the mountain when he was a young boy."

Childress never had the pleasure of meeting her grandmother, since she was born after her grandmother died. But she found out details about her grandmother and grandfather's life through her dad and aunt Mary.

Her grandfather Josie Jackson Johnston was born in 1868. He was next to the youngest of 13 children, and he grew up out in the country on a farm and had a very keen interest in medicine.

There were two doctors in the area that encouraged his interest, so he enrolled in the Atlanta Medical College, which is now Emory University Medical School. While Johnston attended college he worked hard to pay for his tuition.

"He and my grandmother were childhood sweethearts, but (he) would not marry her until he finished medical school and had a practice," said Childress.

They married in 1898 and lived at Lookout Mountain, Georgia, a mountain ridge

located in the northwest corner of Georgia.

"Then once he set himself up with his practice, which my aunt Mary referred to as saddle-bag medicine, he was either in a buggy or on his horse going from farm to farm treating people and delivering babies," Childress said.

Childress' grandmother took care of the home, and she also took care of the farm with help from her son Joseph. She had a garden, raised chickens, quilted, knitted and crocheted.

"She worked very hard and made utilitarian quilts from scraps of wool or cotton that were available," said Childress. "My daddy recalled that they slept under those quilts because they were warm, and Aunt Mary remembered that she created designs that she found in the farmers publications."

Childress took up quilting as a hobby when she moved to Sisters in 2005. Childress's quilting is influenced by her grandmother's designs and choice of color.

Childress' heirloom quilts on display date from the turn of the 20th century up until 1934.

"All of these incredible quilts were going on display without names, so Jeanette Pilak, SOQS director, and my quilter friend Cathy Moen and I came up with the names for the quilts based on their design and history," Childress noted.

Childress has seen her inherited quilts up close, but never hung from a distance like they were during the exhibit. She is amazed by her grandmother's ability to bring together colors and designs.

"We all noticed that my grandmother really had an eye for color, whatever she would piece together looked great."

Two of the quilts, "Tulip" and "New York Beauty," are documented by the Quilt



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Catherine Childress displayed family heirloom quilts.

Project of Georgia. New York Beauty, quilted in 1934, was the last quilt that Johnston made.

"Some of these quilts were hand-pieced and hand-quilted in her lap," Childress said. "I have so much more respect for quilting, knowing what I know now."

Childress remembers that during the 1970s she used one of the utilitarian quilts as a tablecloth.

"It was the thing to do at the time," Childress said, laughing.

She also had the "Cherokee Rose" and "Butterflies" quilt on her twin beds when she lived on the Oregon Coast.

"All of these quilts have been washed at one time or another, but most are still in great shape," Childress said.

One of Childress' favorites is the Butterflies quilt, a colorful quilt with multiple embroidery stitches in each butterfly.

CAR SHOW: Portion of Main Avenue will be closed July 16

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Street closed to traffic — will make for a safer, more enjoyable viewing experience for the public. Vehicle owners are asked to park any vehicle that usually parks on Main overnight to park off on a side street Friday night.

Glory Daze has become one of Sisters' signature summer events, growing into one of the region's premier showing opportunities for car enthusiasts of all stripes.



Childress explained that her grandmother cut out one butterfly pattern that was used over the entire quilt. She then needle-turn appliquéd the pattern onto the fabric and then blanket-stitched all of the butterflies on to give them a border.

"Then for the finishing touch, she stitched decorative embroidery to define them better."

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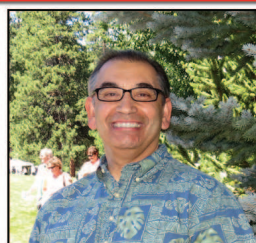
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