

# The practical art of the Quilt

Quilts new and old are on display at the Polk County Museum

By Emily Mentzer  
The Itemizer-Observer

RICKREALL — Quilting is an original upcycling project, taking worn out bits of things, or flour or sugar sacks and sewing them into something that is not only beautiful, but useful.

“The material’s free cause you had sacks, and you have a blanket when you’re done,” said David Moellenberdt, president of the Polk County Historical Society.

The Polk County Museum has its historic quilts on display now through April. Walking around the upper level, each quilt tells a story.

Pioneers would dye flour or sugar sacks, cut them into strips or shapes and assemble them into an intricate design. Other quilts were embroidered with flowers or signatures.

Some detail family history. Others honor U.S. presidents.

All the quilts were donated — some are more modern than others, taking patrons on a time trip from the 1840s to the late 20th century. Some have information telling the story of how it was made on the Oregon Trail, or stitched with a new invention: the sewing machine.

Others are clearly newer, with photos printed onto cloth to make squares.

**Check it out**

The Polk County Museum, 520 S. Pacific Highway W., Rickreall, is hosting Family Day on Saturday from 1:30 to 4 p.m. There is no cost to attend.

Quilting was a social event, Moellenberdt said.

“It was a club,” he said. “They’d bring in the squares and then put them together.”

It is just one way the museum brings history to life.

“We have a little bit of everything, just about,” Moellenberdt said.

Displays tell the story about the Kalapuya Indians who lived in Polk County before the settlers migrated west on the Oregon Trail. Artifacts found in the county show how Native Americans used small rocks to keep their fingers smooth, helping keep their aim true when shooting an arrow.

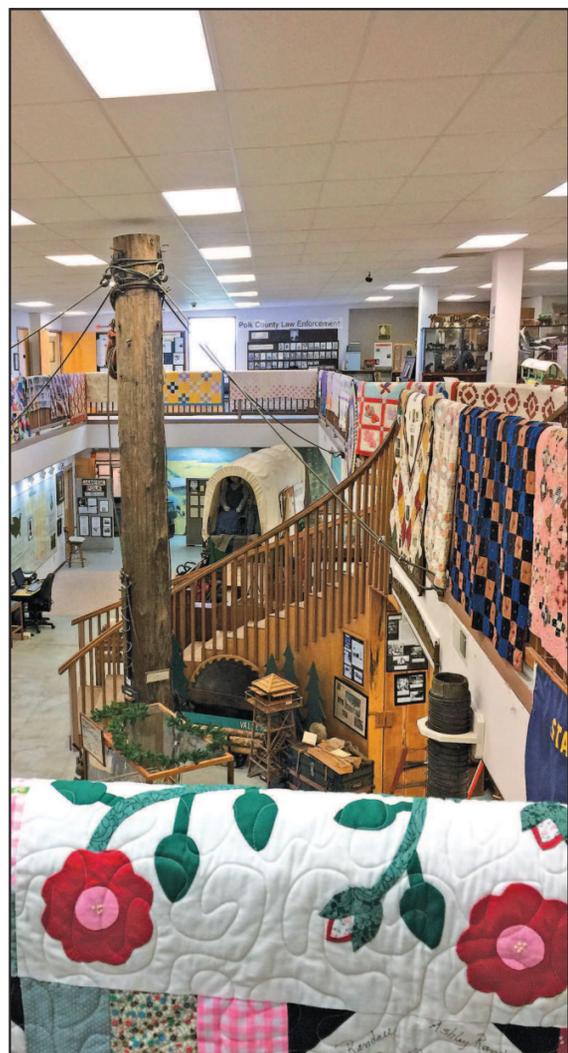
Antique working looms with partially completed rugs wait for a demonstration day, when weavers will come in and show children and adults alike how they work.

“On Family Day, we’ll have two weavers, and a spinner, and a quilter,” Moellenberdt said.



Quilts old and new will be displayed at the Polk County Museum through April. Quilts date from the 1840s to the last 20th century. Some have detailed family history or were made to honor U.S. presidents.

Photos by Emily Mentzer/Itemizer-Observer



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A self-taught quilt historian and avid reader, owner Rachel Greco is frequently asked to give lectures about quilts, quilt blocks and the role of women and their connection to fabric. When not hard at work at Grandma's Attic either on the sales floor or within the webstore developing the selection and quality of the products her customers seek, she spends her time researching the history of quilts and fabrics when time allows.



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