



Mildred Whaley McDonnell Interview Transcript July 11, 1985 Tape 16

TAPE NO. 17

INTERVIEWER: Jeannette Lasansky (J)

INTERVIEWEE: Mildred McDonnell

PLACE: Las Cruces, NM

DATE: July 11, 1985

(J) Did your mother or any relatives ever make simple patches. In other words, just a patch to find out how something placed and decided whether they wanted to do it in the future or not?

(Q) Yes, my mother used to generally do that to see whether she would do that pattern or not, and see how the pieces would go together. If it worked o.k. then she'd go ahead and do a quilt like it, but sometimes the patterns weren't true enough and it didn't turn out very well. Since a lot of the patterns were homemade and came from neighbors and friends and all, why sometimes their patterns wouldn't be very true.

(J) Would she keep those sample patches in a drawer or box or anything?

(Q) A lot of them she did, yes, but I don't have any of those samples. The last couple of years my father was able to do anything, she worked up any thing she could find, like she made little star quilts... squares, about 12" square, but sometimes they wouldn't be all the same size and I had to lay a 12" board down on them and cut the end, and cut some of the points off because as you get older sometimes you don't do as true work as you did when you were younger. So I guess I'll get to that, please sometime when I don't do such good work either. I hope I was held on to it as long as my mother did because she really did well. She lived till she was 87.

(J) Was she pleating until the end for you?

(Q) Till the last year. She was trying to outrun a beekeeper in the yard and fell and fractured her ribs. So after that time she wasn't able to do very much and was a bed patient for a year and up until that time, she was busy every minute. She was like "o, she couldn't be - not busy, she had to keep busy all the while.

(J) How you described this group that was in your house, your mother's hooked rug and quilts. What was the most colorful thing in the house or were all of these things colorful?

(Q) My mother was an awful good housekeeper and she kept everything nice and neat. I remember we had a little hallway in our house and it was a little odd shaped and she put up draperies and tied them back in that hallway. I remember that were about our house than anything else were those draperies because our mother used to come over and we used to have plays and parties in that little stage there. She had a lot of fun like that. But the carpet really was colorful in our house; I'll never forget the carpet. It was colorful. Our sheer curtains had to be put on stretchers over so often, washed and put on stretchers. I left the stretchers behind. I'd give anything if I'd brought them. They were so nice to put lace tablecloths on. I thought I'd never need those again.

(J) Would you have starched something like that?

(Q) I would have done my lace tablecloths on that because they did up so nice.

(J) Do you feel there was any tradition at all in your area of copying a favorite quilt?

COLLECTION

AR.00027 Traditional Quilt Makers in New Mexico Survey

IDENTIFIER

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DOCUMENT

DESCRIPTION

On July 11, 1985 Jeannette Lasansky interviewed quilter Mildred Whaley McDonnell. The interview was transcribed into typescript circa 1985-6, and the transcript was digitized May 23, 2017.

Mildred Whaley was born April 4, 1911, in Pennsboro, Ritchie County, West Virginia, to a family of German and Irish descent. She married Dores Lester McDonnell in St Mary's, West Virginia, on June 22, 1938. After her husband's death in 1963, Mildred Whaley McDonnell worked for West Virginia University (1964-1976). In 1978, she moved to Las Cruces, New Mexico.

McDonnell gathered patterns from family and friends, magazines, kits, batting wrappers, and books. She used both new and traded fabrics. "It's a good hobby and I enjoy it so very much and I love keeping occupied" she wrote on her 1985 survey form.

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DATE

July 11 1985 Date created
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DIMENSIONS

11 in (length) x 8 ½ in (width)

CURATORIAL CATEGORY

Textiles-United States and Canada, Textiles and Dress

RELATED PEOPLE

Museum of International Folk Art (publisher)

Jeannette Lasansky (contributor)