



Mildred Whaley McDonnell Interview Transcript July 11, 1985 Tape 17

Tape No. 16

INTERVIEWER: Jeannette Lasansky (J)

INTERVIEWEE: Mildred McDonnell (M)

PLACE: Las Cruces, New Mexico

DATE: July 11, 1985

- (J) Mrs. McDonnell, can you tell me when was your first experience with a quilt in your whole life that you remember?
- (M) At my mother's home when I was a girl at 14 years old.
- (J) Can you tell us a little bit about what kind of things she was making and how you helped?
- (M) She was piecing quilts and I helped cut out pieces and after that when I started quilting she wouldn't put a knot in my thread because it would be easier for her to pull out if she didn't like the stitches I made, because the stitches I made had to be perfect or they didn't stay in there. Mother was a perfect quilter.
- (J) How many times did she rip out? Do you have any idea?
- (M) Oh, I'm sure she ripped it out a lot, but the first thing I started with was a straight pin, had the head on, and I'd just only make the stitches on the pin. Then my mother got to where she would let me advance to the thread and so I thought I was it when I could use a thread and quilt.
- (J) Was she judging you on evenness, on straightness, ...?
- (M) Yes and small stitches. She liked real small stitches.
- (J) Do you think she'd be proud of what you do now?
- (M) She'd put me on the back when she got too old to quilt and she'd say "I'm so proud of your quilting" as she rubbed her hand over the quilt. She said "Oh, those stitches are just beautiful, the way I want them to be." She was very proud of me.
- (J) Did she stop quilting and just piece for a while, was there a point in her life....?
- (M) The last couple of years she got so she left little knots all over the top of the quilt, loops, and she got so she knew she was doing that and she said "I can't any longer quilt with you, but I'll watch you." One time I had the flu and I didn't feel like quilting she said, "Now I'm going to wrap a blanket around you, you can go right ahead and quilt and I'll keep you warm so you can quilt." And I did.
- (J) This was when you were living in ...?
- (M) In West Virginia.
- (J) Was she living with you or near you?
- (M) When my father died she was a widow for ten years so she spent a lot of time with me after my husband was killed. So we quilted a lot together and we quilted a lot of quilts together while she was able to do it.
- (J) How many were you doing with all the quilts? Were they for family, friends?
- (M) Well, at that time, a lot of them I was giving to my children. As far as I made the quilts, I gave them to them. They were married and they needed the quilts so we quilted

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

May 23 2017 Date modified



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)