**Clothing and Handicrafts in Kentucky Resource guide**

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**Introduction:**

This resource guide is designed to provide you with tools to help people engage with the past and connect with others. There are images to share with your clients, keywords to share and questions to discuss, and articles about making clothing or sewing in Kentucky.

**Images:**

-Encourage your audience members to look through the images included in the kit and to share any memories they have about sewing, knitting, cross-stitching, crocheting, quilting, weaving, or making clothes.

Some conversation prompts can include:

* What do you want to say about what is going in this picture?
* What do you think is happening in this picture?
* Did you sew/quilt/knit/crochet/weave? If so, who taught you how to do this?
* Did you teach others how to sew/knit/crochet/weave? Who did you teach?
* If you can crochet and knit, which of these do you like to do more?

**Keywords:**

Use the words below to spark conversation about topic. For example, were there special times set aside for sewing or quilting? Did you gather with others to quilt, knit, sew, or crochet? Did you dye your own wool? What kind of loom or quilting frame did you use? Did you give away your work as gifts? How did you store your creations?

-Sewing

-Batting

-Knitting needles

-Crochet needles

-Yarn

-Thread

-Loom

-Frame

-Purl

-Tailor

-Stitch

-Cross-stitch

-Needlepoint

-Darning

-Patching

-Sewing machine

-Bobbin

-Treadle

-Singer sewing machine

-Tacking

-Applique

-Backing

-Backstitch

-Basting

-Bias and Bias tape

-Quilt Blocks

-Shuttle

-Weft

**Books to share:**

*Collection of the National Quilt Museum* by National Quilt Museum. (2009).

View photographs of various quilts that have been displayed or are part of the collection at the National Quilt Museum in Paducah, KY. (Summary provided by Hilary Writt, Workforce and Adult Services Consultant, KDLA.)

*Kentucky Quilts and Their Makers* by Mary Washington Clarke. 1982. University Press of Kentucky: Lexington.

Kentucky's contribution to the perennially popular American craft of quiltmaking is a rich and varied one. Mary Clarke examines here the state of the craft in Kentucky and finds it as lively today as it was 150 years ago. (Summary provided by Amazon.)

**Oral History Interviews:**

-Share some clips from these oral history interviews, which are available from the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, University of Kentucky Libraries. After playing clips or an entire interview, encourage your audience members to share their own memories. Use the keywords and phrases listed above to help generate conversation too.

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Interview with Betty Cornett, December 28, 2016

*Stinking Creek Stories Oral History Project*

Interview Accession 2017oh004\_scs021

https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt734t6f4h09

(The section about sewing and quilting is between the 37:45-41:02 mark.)

Interview with Opal McKenzie, July 19, 1988

*Project: Appalachia: Family and Gender in the Coal Community Oral History Project*

Interview Accession 1988oh126\_app144

https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt76m902201q

(The section about sewing and quilting is between the 17:47-18:57 mark.)

**Articles:**

Article 1:

God Given Gifts - 91-year-old Franklinton resident has been making quilts for more than 70 years

Henry County Local (New Castle, KY) - March 17, 2010

Author: Jonna Spelbring Priester

With a single lamp casting a warm yellow glow at her side, Corinne Barton's hands move quickly as she weaves her needle and thread through layers of fabric and batting.

It's a quick dance, as she nudges the needle with her right index finger up and down through the layers, until the needle reaches her thumb. Then she pulls the needle and thread through, making a neat line through a small square. The process is one she's repeated countless times since she was a teenager.

Barton, a 91-year-old Franklinton resident, began quilting around the age of 13. Over the almost 80 years since she began, she's made 35 quilts, giving 16 away to family members.

For years, quilting was on hold as Barton raised her three daughters, worked the family's farm and maintained her home.

Over time, she found more time for quilting, and continues to do so, even if only for a couple of hours each night with the television on for background noise.

"I enjoy doing it, and I thank God I've still got good hands and feet," she said..

"Somebody told me one day, it's just kind of a nerve medicine."

Barton enjoys the beauty of quilting, and prefers the art of hand-quilting to just about anything else, including piecing together the quilt tops. From start to finish, a quilt takes Barton about three months to complete. Daughter Barbara sometimes will do a cross stitch pattern on the quilts, too.

Ideas for Barton's quilts come from quilting books, or simply by looking at others' work.

Despite the number of quilts she's made over the years, Barton never entered one in the county fair - she was afraid someone would steal them - and never sold one.

But Barton's gifts don't stop at quilting. She began making clothes while she was younger and still living with her parents, and continued making clothes as she and her husband started and raised a family. Handmade clothes also have been made for Barton's grandchildren, sister and mother-in-law.

As with her quilting, Barton sometimes got ideas from looking at clothes in a store. "I knew I couldn't afford them, so I took my pencil and paper, and drew them out," she said. Over the years, Barton has made a number of dresses for dances and weddings - including her own.

Quilting has changed considerably, as one might expect, over Barton's lifetime. Now there are more, and better, materials from which to choose. "We used to make kind of a crazy quilt," she said, "just taking pieces of old coats, old over coats and men's suits, and make a piece fit in here and there."

And there is, of course, the change in sewing machines. When Barton started, she used a treadle sewing machine. It was a Singer that she purchased for just $15 at her mother's suggestion. She used that for years, until her husband gave her what she considers one of the best gifts he ever gave.

"I had surgery when I was 30," she said. "When I was in the hospital, my husband had my sewing machine made into an electric."

She's gone through a couple of sewing machines since then, and now uses a New Home sewing machine, that sits neatly in front of her bedroom window.

A gift for sewing showed itself at an early age. "I just think it was a gift that was given to me," Barton said. "I started out making doll clothes when I was in school.

"I just like to sew."

Her knack for sewing helped Barton to earn straight A grades in home economics.

During her lifetime, Barton made many of her own things, including lye soap. "Every fall, my husband stripped tobacco," she said. "And every fall ... I made my soap. Lye soap. Made it in a big dishpan, let it sit until it hardened, and that did me until the next fall."

For years, Barton also raised her own garden - something she had to give up when she was 85. Now, arthritis, particularly in her back, has taken its toll: Barton no longer can mow the yard, climb and lift things, and depends on others for help.

But along with sewing, there's one more thing she hasn't given up: music.

Though Barton's hearing isn't quite what it used to be, she still plays the small piano in her living room - another one of her late husband's best gifts.

"I got my musical talent from my grandfather," she said.

A member of Franklinton Baptist Church, Barton still plays the piano for the small congregation, though it "doesn't sound right to me."

For years, Barton was in a band with others, and at one time played the banjo. "We played at tobacco festivals and field days ... (and) played at the Kentucky Hotel one year for the Farm Bureau convention."

Barton was 10 the first time she picked up a banjo. "My daddy ordered a banjo from Sears & Roebuck, it was $10," she said.

"One day, there wasn't anybody but me (home), and I tuned that banjo to where it sounded right."

Last week, she sang, with clarity, the first line of the song she picked out that day: "I can't wait until the time I hear the church bells chime..."

That was when Barton was just 10 years old, and she would play into her teenage years, when she started dating.

At 19, Barton married Kenneth, and they enjoyed nearly 57 years of marriage, before his death in 1994. Many of her talents were on hold while she raised her family. "I didn't have time for a banjo, three girls and a piano," she said.

"I think, I have the gift to sew, the gift to quilt and the gift to play the piano, I believe these are gifts from God," she said. "And I cook.

"My sisters say, ‘you got all the talents.'"

Barton resumed many of her gifts as her daughters grew up and left home to start their own families.

Today, Barton is thankful she can still get around. She still cans produce, even though she doesn't have a garden - others bring produce to her.

"I don't have a lot of strength, I get tired. But I'm so thankful I can get around and do the things I do."

Article 2:

A Common Thread Runs Through Family - Daughter Inherited Dad's Love of Sewing

Lexington Herald-Leader (KY) - February 11, 2003

Author: Risa Brim, Herald-Leader Business Writer

Decades ago on Paris' Main Street, there was a humble little upholstery shop with the name Strickler's Furniture Co. stenciled across the front window.

Inside were "miles and miles" of furniture, some moldy and dusty, some almost new, some leaning lopsided with missing legs or frayed from wear and tear, and some already stripped to their wooden skeletons.

In the back of the shop, there were long, fat rolls of fabric, all different textures and colors, and three industrial sewing machines, all buzzing and humming along.

And a little girl named Lisa watched her father's large hands as they measured, snipped, stitched, stained and stretched, transforming used couches and chairs into furniture fit for a queen.

"I was just so fascinated by my father and his work, how he would take something old and make it into something beautiful," said Lisa Woods, now 47.

It was in those days, and in that shop, that Woods' love of sewing was born.

Now she spends her days almost as her father, Claude Parker, did.

Woods owns The Final Stitch in Eastland Shopping Center on Winchester Road, where she spends her days hunched over a sewing machine or ironing board, repairing and altering wedding gowns, winter coats and blue jeans.

The business, The Final Stitch, which she opened with help from her father, takes in about $60,000 a year and allows Woods to spend her days doing something she loves, and her evenings with her family.

Falling in love

Woods' fondest childhood memories are of watching her father during long days at the popular upholstery shop.

Parker, who began working as a teen-ager in the shop he eventually bought, taught her how to work the sewing machines and guided her tiny fingers whenever she got to be "daddy's little helper."

"I used to love going to the shop and helping my dad," Woods said. "He taught me to make pillows and spent all day talking to me while he worked."

In addition to learning the tricks of the trade from her father, Woods learned a lot about sewing from her mother, Gloria Parker. Her mother made clutch bags and doll clothes for Woods and her sister from the fabric scraps at her father's shop.

"I knew back then that I wanted to be a seamstress," she said.

A different path

But after she graduated from Paris High School in 1973, she got a degree in child care from Eastern Kentucky University.

She worked as a teacher's assistant for a time, then got married and decided to stay home with her two boys.

Eventually, though, she found her way back to a sewing machine.

In 1986, she became an assistant to the head tailor at a clothing store.

"He really took me under his wing," Woods said. "He taught me everything -- measuring, hemming sleeves, shortening collars -- everything."

Eventually, she became the head tailor at the shop. About the same time, she expanded her knowledge at a tailoring school near Chicago.

After eight years, Woods took a job managing a dry-cleaning service and its on-site tailoring shop.

In 1995, she started thinking hard about starting a business.

A shop of her own

Woods started in her Lexington home, making clothing and doing alterations. Eventually, she decided it was time to open a store.

She eyed the storefront in Eastland Shopping Center, waiting for a vacancy.

When it came, she quickly signed the lease and the business opened in September 2000.

"I had always wanted a shop, and I knew I had to start somewhere, so I just stepped out on faith and got started," Woods said.

Her husband, Roy Woods, and her father helped start The Final Stitch.

"It was so much fun having my dad help me get started," she said. "I could tell he was proud that his little girl had grown up and was going to have a shop of her own." Her father died in late October, less than two months after she opened.

Daddy would be proud.

Woods processes clothes for about 400 customers a month. She begins her day long before the store opens and works non-stop until it closes.

"I love what I do," she said. "This is my passion, my God-given talent. I like the challenges and I like to see my customers' eyes light up when they see the finished product."

She had to stop making clothes to focus on tailoring and alterations.

"The days were just too long, and I wanted to spend time with my family," said Woods, whose husband is her bookkeeper. "I was working 18-hour days."

Woods, who works alone, said she's learned a lot about running a business.

Still, the lessons she learned from her father have become her own business principles.

"Do quality work, no matter how big or small the job, always give every customer the utmost care and individual attention, and never make a promise you can't keep.

"I know my father would be very proud."

Article 3:

A force for good: Homemakers Week means more than keeping house

The Advocate-Messenger (Danville, KY) - October 7, 2016

By: Alethea Price

Boyle County Extension Office

When you hear the word "homemaker" you immediately think of a certain set of words. Housewife, cook, mother and maid could be used to describe a homemaker but they are much more than that. Homemakers are strong leaders, willing volunteers, skilled educators, family and friends. They are more than just a word, they are a force for good.

Extension Homemakers is a volunteer organization that works with the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service to help improve the quality of life for families and Kentucky communities through leadership development, service and education. The week recognizes and celebrates their contributions to their community and the state during the past year.

Extension Homemakers are active members of their communities, contributing more than 220,000 hours of volunteer service for extension-sponsored activities and more than 322,000 hours of service for community projects.

Throughout Kentucky, Extension Homemakers have provided relief and support when it is needed most. When a flood in 2015 devastated the Flat Gap area of Johnson County, members of the Red Bush Homemakers Cub worked with its Community Center to provide assistance to the more than 500 flood victims, preparing and serving meals to about 300 people every day for two weeks. They collected and distributed food, clothing and cleaning supplies to victims.

Meade County Extension Homemakers worked to educate the public about food insecurity in their community. Through a soup supper and cake auction, they raised more than $2,100 and collected hundreds of pounds of food and other items to help fellow Meade Countians in need.

Boyle County Homemakers highly value family, friendship and fun. Each year they participate in different social events such as the Living Well Seminar and the County Annual Meeting providing fun opportunities for fellowship. They also attend educational programs each month that address universal topics such as food, health, money management, and family life. Homemakers are always learning new skills and sharing them with others.

Heritage skills such as knitting, sewing, and quilt making barely scratch the surface of what Homemakers are capable of. They compete in annual cultural arts contests with many members winning blue ribbons at the state level. They also enter handmade items in Floral Hall in the County Fair. What a wealth of talent there is in this county. One way they put those talents to use by giving back. They make pillowcase dresses for Haiti, blankets for Camp Horsin' Around, and lap quilts for the hospital.