

# Yarns



The Newsletter of The National Museum of the American Coverlet

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## From the President

By Edward Maeder

Who would have thought when we opened our doors six years ago and had just one exhibition room that now we would be able to boast FOUR galleries and a gift shop that has become mecca for both textile and coverlet lovers? And when people say, "Bedford, Pennsylvania, where is that?" it gives me a chance to speak about a rare museum, uniquely specialized, that has brought great joy and inspiration to visitors from all over the world.



Woven coverlets are an art form that mirrors the rise of the new American republic, and the symbiosis between handweaving and the quickly developing industrial revolution that would change the world. For those of us who both love and understand the importance of textiles in our society, coverlets represent not only the development of nineteenth-century aesthetics, but also the use of a recently perfected technology that brought individually made, practical as well as beautiful, objects into people's lives. Coverlets also enhance the feelings of individual accomplishment by incorporating the weaver's and owners names, and the date when the piece was woven. Today we understand that 'designer labels' are a form of status, and they are.

But, more than a century and a half ago, “designer labels” were proudly displayed on the beds of coverlet owners. Coverlets became part of the “Colonial Revival” in the twentieth century, and the tradition that each had been made from wool, spun, dyed and woven by some distant relative became perceived knowledge. Now this myth has been corrected, and the true place of these household artifacts is being investigated and refined. Authorship is part of our recognition of “quality.” So to know WHO made (in our case wove) the coverlet in question drives the research.

At the National Museum of the American Coverlet, as new explorations expand our knowledge, we will continue to share our findings with you and to offer changing exhibitions that inspire and inform all of our visitors.



## The Director’s Corner

By Melinda Zongor

### ***HEROES: CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE***

Since the early twentieth century, there have been many heroes in the coverlet field. Some are well known, while many are unsung.

Eliza Calvert Hall (1856-1935) went door to door through the foothills of the Appalachians asking housewives if they had “an old coverlet.” She recognized the danger of losing forever their “peculiar quality of beauty.” Her 1912 book, *A Book of Hand Woven Coverlets*, written in the flowery style typical of her day, is a much loved reference and one of the first of its kind. Ironically, the last chapter of the book is titled, “The Heirloom Unappreciated.”

In 1890, young Yale graduate Frances Louisa Goodrich (1856-1944) travelled to North Carolina with the idea of assisting the poor folk of Appalachia, and instead found that she was the one being educated. Enthralled with their handicrafts, she was one of several pioneers who worked to create a market for their products and, as a result, helped put food on their tables. Her journey lasted for over thirty years. Her beautifully sensitive book, *Mountain Homespun*, published in 1931, captures her experience with passages that – should you be fortunate enough to have a copy – will bring tears to your eyes.

*“In the younger women who were learning to weave and keeping at it, I could see the growth of character. A slack-twisted person cannot make a success as a weaver of coverlets. Patience and perseverance are of the first necessity, and the exercise of these strengthen the fibers of the soul. Rhonda shed many tears over her first web, for the loom was old, and the material all flax, the hardest thread of all to manage for a warp when home spun. I had not seen the tears, but divined them and when, having persisted, she brought me the finished web it was worth to her and to me more than its weight in gold.*”

*“One who has had to do with hundreds of mountain girls in their teens has told me that never did she find one to be of weak and flabby character whose mother was a weaver; there was always something in the child to build on.”*

Berea College in Kentucky, a school of many “firsts,” established a groundbreaking program where female students could weave to pay their way through college.

Fast forward to more recent times (no room here for the full story!) and we find heroes like Martha Jack and Kay Hawthorne. Martha, originally from New Jersey, moved with her husband to New York State, where they discovered coverlets. Beginning in 1976 and for many years thereafter, she organized and ran the delightful Alling Coverlet Museum in Palmyra, telling people that she had “a little coverlet museum in New York.”

In Maryland, Kay Hawthorne received her first coverlet as a gift from her husband Dave. They both loved and lived with antiques, and the coverlet—with the date and name inscribed into it—grabbed her attention. A long and distinguished career of first class research was kindled.

We all know people in this field of study whose work has gone insufficiently recognized, or worse yet, unrecognized. At the same time, important coverlets – singles and entire collections – significant numbers in the last few years – have been disbursed, sold, or left to individuals and institutions that are unprepared for, or uninterested in, appropriate and appreciative stewardship or bringing them to the public.

Education is an uphill and urgent challenge. With so many knowledgeable people being lost as we all “age out,” and too many folks of the next generation having little or no interest in history or things old, we have our work cut out for us.

One of the main reasons for NMAC’s founding was that there are fewer coverlets (and people who know and love them) every day. If coverlets are in danger now, they will be even more so in the coming years! So what do we do? We spread the word. And sometimes it isn’t easy. As happens in any field, some of the most knowledgeable people have done important study and research work only to find other people taking credit. It takes true dedication to continue in the face of such frustration and injustice, but most of them forge ahead anyway.

One man did the research for a landmark reference book, and the editor was given the credit. A woman who virtually singlehandedly founded, opened, and ran an important institution was unceremoniously locked out when someone else took over. Another woman designed and wrote a book about a collection only to find it published under the collector’s name as author. ...And there are more.

In recognition of these challenges, this Museum is dedicated not only to the coverlets, but also to the memory of the people – heroes and pioneers – who have gone before us who have loved and protected them, studied and written about them, saved, taught, and did whatever they could to help make sure that coverlets remain safely here for us to enjoy.

Those heroes include you, the folks who support and contribute to this Museum. Thank you, Everyone, for all you do. In honor of all the generous people who have contributed to the growth of the Museum collection, object labels in our exhibitions now include the name of the donor. As Eliza Calvert Hall stated so well:

*“...a pressed flower in an old book, the brass candlestick that used to stand on a shining mahogany table along with the family Bible and the basket that held your grandmother’s knitting -- ... the spell of the past is not as strong in any one of these as it is in a coverlet that, like a family tradition, has drifted down to us of the present day to be held in honor or cast aside in dishonor, but always seeming to say: “Have you forgotten? Have you forgotten?” Some of us have not forgotten.”*

# The Board of Directors – It Takes A Village

By Edward Maeder

In the course of human events we all meet new people, through work, socializing and increasingly via connections on the internet. As we investigate each other, we discover that new friends are often on boards of various types. It is usually mentioned with pride, as the job of a board member is one that involves some sort of giving, most often in the form of advice and guidance. Board members are rarely paid for their efforts, but the gratification of working with a cause that is personally important can be rich payment indeed.

So what kind of people become board members for an institution such as The National Museum of the American Coverlet? The backgrounds and interests of our current board members are easily accessible on our web site. But now it is time to acknowledge the changes in the makeup of our Board of Directors. Two of our Directors have retired:

## Charli Thompson



Quilts are a passion for Charli Thompson and she arrived at NMAC just as the Museum was launching its first collection of printed cottons based on design

elements from the Museum's coverlets. She worked tirelessly with volunteers cutting hundreds of yards of cloth into 'quilt kits' and also designed many quilted projects herself. After a career in public service, she continued to give of her time and talent by opening the door to the museum's wealth of design to quilters across the country. She will remain a supporter and dear friend of the Museum.

## Jes Horwath



Jes Horwath has been with NMAC since its natal days back in 2006. A passionate collector and the "king" of volunteers, Jes worked tirelessly on preparing and expanding the building into the exceptional series of galleries it now has. As a retired teacher, specialist in German, and avid antique collector, his joyous presence always buoyed our spirits. He traveled through rain and shine from distant Illinois to be part of this exceptional organization. He will remain active as an ex-officio board member, and we are all pleased to enjoy his continued participation.



## The Board of Directors – It Takes A Village, Cont'd

Museum boards are constantly changing, and the valuable contributions of ALL of our members both past and present are vital to the health of our organization. It is now my pleasant duty to announce two new members of our Board of Directors.

### Ellen Campbell Pskowski



More than forty years ago, Ellen Campbell Pskowski's parents fell in love with the view from a farm on Glade Pike in Manns Choice, Maryland. The farm became the family's summer

home. Ellen later introduced her husband Harry to the region, and they vacationed there with their grown-up children – Tim, Rebecca, and Martha. A clinical social worker practicing psychotherapy in Rockville, Maryland, Ellen also writes fiction. Many of her stories are set in Bedford County, which happens to be near her parental grandfather's birthplace.

Ellen's mother was a world-class knitter and Ellen's daughters carry on the tradition. Martha studied weaving at Sandy Spring Friends School, winning prizes at the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival. Inspired by the Zongors and her daughters, Ellen tried introductory weaving and drop spindle spinning classes. She decided the practice of the textile arts is best left to the younger generation. A charter member of the Museum, Ellen is delighted and honored to serve on the Board.

### Mike Pasquerette



History, weaving, and music are all passions for new board member Mike Pasquerette. Mike has worked for the past two decades in the important field of information technology, much of that time at Hood College in

Frederick, Maryland. He and his family live in an antebellum home in Sharpsburg, Maryland. His wife Mary and daughter Emmeline are active in their local ATHA (Association of Traditional Hooking Artists) rug hooker's guild, and all three Pasquerettes volunteer at guild events. Mike is a weaver and especially enjoys coverlets and overshot patterns of the nineteenth century. An accomplished musician, Mike has played for twelve years with the 105th Pennsylvania Wildcat Regiment Band of Indiana, Pennsylvania, as well as the Spires Brass Band of Frederick, Maryland.



# Membership Renewals

The National Museum of the American Coverlet is your museum. It is here *for you and because of you*. By renewing your Membership, you help this Museum continue in its mission of education, exhibition, and conservation, introducing the public to American woven coverlets. Your membership includes

- a full year of free admission,
- a subscription to the newsletter *Yarns*,
- reduced rates for events and programs,
- a 10% discount on your Museum Shop purchases, and
- free access to the reference library.

Take advantage of these “perks” – visit frequently and make the most of your membership. Meet and greet other people who share your (and our) interests in early textiles. Come and enjoy the beautiful town of Bedford, Pennsylvania, with all its myriad attractions.

Your continued support and membership are truly appreciated. We hope to see you often. Let us know what we can do for you.



## The National Museum of the American Coverlet

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## We Need Your Email Address



We want to share the latest Museum news and coming events as well as interesting articles about coverlets with our members. Please send your current email address to the Museum at [info@coverletmuseum.org](mailto:info@coverletmuseum.org) so that we can be in touch. We promise to never give, lend, or sell your information away to anyone else.

# Coverlet College

By Ron Walter

The National Museum of the American Coverlet's first Coverlet College was held on September 28, 29, and 30. The attendees enjoyed two full days of coverlet presentations and hands-on activities. During Friday night's optional Meet and Greet, participants toured the current coverlet exhibition and met fellow attendees and presenters. Everyone enjoyed meeting new coverlet enthusiasts, and making or renewing acquaintances with veteran coverlet collectors, researchers, and weavers.

Starting off Saturday morning, the attendees introduced themselves and described their particular interest in coverlets to the group. The first presentation by Edward Maeder provided background textile history. It also described the fibers used in weaving coverlets, and how to recognize these fibers under a microscope. In addition, participants learned how to document a coverlet—whether it is in their personal collection or a museum collection.

Most presentations were followed by a hands-on lab where the attendees split into groups and examined example coverlets in detail. Several sessions were followed by a quick coverlet quiz so that the participants could test themselves on what they had learned. Morning and afternoon sessions were followed by a long break and snacks so attendees could get to know the staff

and each other better through informal conversations.

The second Saturday morning presentation by Ron Walter described various types of geometric coverlets, followed by a discussion of the fancy coverlets woven in New York and New Jersey. After a tasty lunch, the first Saturday afternoon session by Richard Jeryan described the various types of looms used in weaving geometric and fancy coverlets. It was exciting to see and hear a Jacquard head operating in the video included in this session. The session ended with a tour to see an eighteenth-century, four-shaft, German-style loom on exhibit at the Museum and the Jacquard heads in the NMAC collection. In the second afternoon presentation, Chris Jeryan

described the various weave structures found in geometric and fancy coverlets. The lab time for this session gave the attendees a chance to see and compare coverlets that utilize these various weave structures.

Sunday began with an overview presentation by Ron Walter of fancy coverlets from many states—Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Kansas, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, and Wisconsin. After another hands-on lab and quiz, each attendee received a certificate for completing Coverlets 101. The morning concluded with a Show and Tell session. Each attendee took a turn showing and



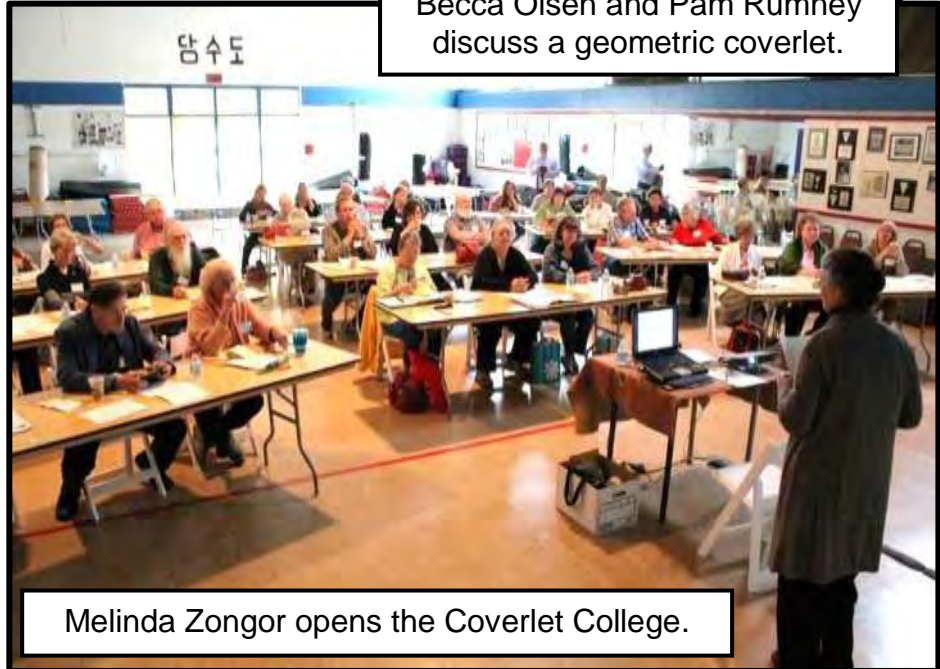
Hands-On Lab Session: Identify the fiber and the weave structure.

describing the coverlets he or she had brought. Veteran collector Trish Herr showed an exemplary collection of crib coverlets, each woven in a geometric pattern. Many coverlets elicited oohs and ahhs as they were unfolded. A coverlet Show and Tell is always an anticipated part of any coverlet event, and it was great to see so many attendees participating.

Most participants filled out a survey and many constructive comments were received. Changes and enhancements will be incorporated into next year's Coverlet College based on these comments. In addition to repeating a series of basic coverlet presentations, plans are underway to have a separate track of advanced sessions presented by recognized guest coverlet experts. Watch the NMAC website for more details about Coverlet College 2013 as plans are finalized.



Becca Olsen and Pam Rumney discuss a geometric coverlet.



Melinda Zongor opens the Coverlet College.



Edward Maeder and Trish Herr examine a collection.



# Collection Spotlight: John E. Schneider Coverlet

By Chris Jeryan

The vast majority of the coverlets in NMAC's collection were woven east of the Mississippi River. However, this coverlet woven by John E. Schneider in 1872 is a rare example of one that was woven west of the Mississippi in Missouri. Only a very few other weavers—most notably Henry Adolf (1815-1907) and Henry Overholt (1813-1880)—are known to have woven fancy coverlets in Missouri.

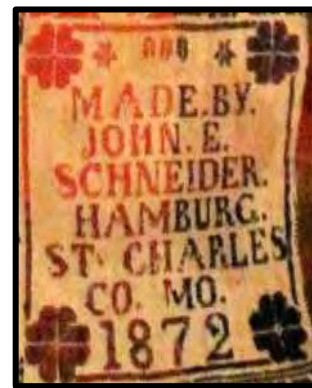
The weaver of this beautiful red-white-and-blue coverlet, John E. Schneider, was born in Bavaria, Germany, on April 6, 1823. He immigrated to the United States from Germany with a large family group, landing at New Orleans in December 1839. Unlike other documented Missouri coverlet weavers who moved to Missouri from eastern states, John Schneider and his family traveled up the Mississippi and Missouri rivers from New Orleans to establish a settlement at Hamburg, St. Charles County, Missouri. In 1853, John married 18-year-old, German-born Catherine Long, also a resident of St. Charles County. They had at least five children—Margaret (born about 1854), Eleonor/Lena (born about 1856), Mary (born about 1859), John (born in 1861), and William (born in 1869). In U. S. Census records from 1860 through 1900, John Schneider gives his occupation as “farmer,” but we know he also wove fancy coverlets for more than 20 years. John Schneider lived in Hamburg, Missouri, for the rest of his



life, dying there on June 26, 1903. He is buried in Friedens German/English Evangelical Cemetery in St. Charles County.

Some of the motifs that Schneider used in his coverlets (like the Scottish bluebells seen in the border of NMAC's coverlet) are similar to designs used by Indiana weavers and suggest that he may have learned the weaving trade as an Indiana weaver's apprentice during the 1840s. Coverlet scholars have suggested that this

Indiana weaver may have been Samuel Stinger or John Wissler. Eight centerfield designs are documented in Schneider's surviving coverlets. Earlier in his weaving career he used a star logo in the cornerblock, but, sometime in the 1860s, he began signing his coverlets with the cornerblock seen in NMAC's coverlet.



For more information on John E. Schneider and Missouri coverlets see: Fivel, Sharon, and Laurel Wilson. “Art in Craft: Nineteenth-Century Missouri Coverlets.” *Gateway Heritage: The Magazine of the Missouri Historical Society* 11 (Fall 1990): 66-7.

# Catherine B. Hawthorne

## In Memoriam

By Melinda Zongor

The coverlet world has suffered an important and devastating loss. Catherine (Kay) Hawthorne passed away on January 28, 2012.

Kay was a top-notch researcher, unquestionably one of the most well respected figures in the field of coverlet study. She travelled the countryside for many years, seeking out, carefully documenting, and sometimes collecting the coverlets she found. Portions of her collection were featured in the books *And So To Sleep*, a catalog of a 1999 exhibition at The American Textile History Museum in Lowell, Massachusetts, and *American Jacquard Coverlets*, a 1997 exhibition at Salisbury State University, Maryland. She made major contributions to several other important books as well.



From *American Jacquard Coverlets* by  
Catherine Hawthorne

Kay was the unheralded force behind the well-known database that, until recently, resided at the University of Maryland. She also generously contributed many important materials to the collections and archives of The National Museum of the American Coverlet in Bedford, Pennsylvania. Some of her collection can also be seen at the American Textile History Museum in Lowell, Massachusetts.

Kay's enthusiasm was contagious, her knowledge was boundless, and—most notably—her willingness to share both was unparalleled and undaunted, in spite of the fact that she was often deprived of credit for the work she did. More important than all that—she was a thoroughly good lady. Laszlo and I enjoyed Kay's friendship for some twenty-five years. We enjoyed every minute we ever had with her; and we always wished we lived closer together, to allow for more.

We miss Kay terribly. She will not be forgotten, and she can never be replaced. Her dear husband Dave is in our thoughts and hearts at this difficult time. We are truly grateful for the honor of knowing them both.

# John King's Pattern Book

By Ron Walter

John King's Pattern Book has been loaned The National Museum of the American Coverlet by members of the King family. Kitty Bell and I were delighted to attend a presentation by Pat Hilts, a Wisconsin-based weaver and textile historian, discussing this pattern book at NMAC on July 14, 2012. About forty people participated with the majority being members of the King family who were holding a family reunion in nearby Everett, Pennsylvania. Pat discussed the three weaver sons of John King, Sr.—Christian King (1809-1886), John King, Jr. (1813-1889), and Abraham King (1815-1903). Pat and Vic Hilts are researching the King family, and Pat has analyzed many of the patterns in the John King manuscript.

The title page of John King's book is inscribed "John Kings Book February 20th 1839 Sideling Hille Bedfore County State Pa." John King

moved to Bloody Run, now called Everett, in West Providence Township, Bedford County, and he is listed as a weaver there in the 1850 and 1860 U. S. Censuses. His book includes tables on weaving, dye recipes, and forty Double Worke patterns. Most patterns include a pattern name, a color draft, the number of cuts required of each color, a profile draft, and a tie-up diagram.



The Christian King's Pattern Book also has survived, and Pat was able to include a comparison of some pages from each book. In addition, she presented a page from the Christian King book that records an inventory of his coverlets on January 28, 1881. There were thirteen coverlets listed—six Double coverlets including two all wool in McKees pattern changed, two in McKees pattern, and one in the Potatoe Blossom pattern; four Float coverlets including two Star pattern and one Heart and Star pattern; and three Single coverlets including two all wool in the Rose Pattern and one Twilled work.

Pat's presentation also included pictures of a twill coverlet woven in the Crossbar Rose pattern that descended in the John King, Jr., branch of the family. Other surviving examples of King family coverlets include a double weave coverlet in the McKees pattern that descended in the Abraham King branch of the



John King's Crossbar Rose Pattern Coverlet

family (donated to NMAC by Karen King), and a star work coverlet that was brought to the presentation by a great-great-granddaughter of Abraham King. Pat then showed comparisons of selected patterns in John King's book with other existing coverlets. She also compared some of John King's patterns to those with the same pattern name in other weavers' pattern books, including Christian Frey (1811-1880) and Adam Minnich. In some examples, they

are similar or identical; in other cases, they are completely different.

Pat hopes to publish the manuscript with the pattern analyses included. At the end of her presentation, she displayed a hand-bound version of the manuscript and pattern analyses in the format she would like to see published. Everyone in the weaving and coverlet communities is anxious to have this treasure of weaving information published.

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## NMAC Collectors Corner Update

### Join Today!!!

YAHOO! GROUPS



On December 29, 2011, the National Museum of the American Coverlet launched their internet, members-only, special interest Yahoo Group—NMAC Collectors Corner. Only a small number of NMAC members have taken advantage of this special benefit. The group provides a forum for NMAC members to ask questions about their coverlets and coverlet weavers. It also provides an easy way to exchange information about coverlets in the NMAC collection and personal collections, as well as coverlets seen in museums, historical societies, and auctions. Members can upload and view images of coverlets and related material on the site. Appraisals of

coverlets are not given. We have already seen several unusual geometric coverlets, a fancy coverlet woven by an unrecorded Pennsylvania maker in an unusual weave structure, and an unusual Peter Leisey coverlet. NMAC Board of Directors members Chris Jeryan and Ron Walter moderate the NMAC Collectors Corner.

So don't be shy, join today! All questions are welcome—from the very simple to the more complex—and all contributions are appreciated. To join, first, send your current email address to [info@coverletmuseum.org](mailto:info@coverletmuseum.org) stating that it is the correct email address to be used for NMAC Collectors Corner. Then, go to [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NMAC\\_collectors/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NMAC_collectors/) and select the Join This Group! button.

# Martha and John Jack Gallery Dedication

On April 21, 2012, the main exhibition gallery at The National Museum of the American Coverlet was dedicated to honor John and Martha Jack. The following article excerpts remarks made by Director/Curator Melinda Zongor at this dedication.



*...Today's event is about generosity and gratitude. We are very pleased to honor and celebrate a number of folks who are near and dear to us—the generous donors and volunteers who support this Museum. From day one, people have stepped forward to help establish it and keep it growing. Sure, we've had our share of tense and scary episodes, and no doubt we'll have many more; but those only serve to highlight the triumphs and make them all the more special.*

*Martha and John Jack have been cherished friends for about 25 years....For several years, we have wanted to have an occasion like today, but they are so self-effacing, they politely insisted, "Oh, no, thanks. You don't have to do that." Finally we decided it can't wait any longer, because whether they want it or not, we owe them this. It's the least we can do.*

*So what's the big deal? What have they done? As many of you know, for a long time Laszlo and I have felt the need for a certain kind of coverlet institution. After a few years of looking*

*for a suitable place and situation, it all came to a head in the fall of 2005, when, to our great joy and amazement, a major collector promised financial support if we could get a museum off the ground. It gave us the courage to move forward and bring our dream to fruition.*

*...At some point it became clear to us and the Board members that the pledge of support was falling through and we were in a pretty tough situation....Martha and John Jack have for years contributed to the Colonial Coverlet Guild of America, and their longtime involvement with the Alling Museum is legendary. So it was probably only natural that when they got wind of our predicament here, they wasted no time in stepping up. Their support kept this Museum alive for that entire exciting, terrifying first year.*

*Together, they quietly provided a financial groundwork that allowed this Museum to concentrate on growing, getting itself established, and working toward its current fiscal, freestanding independence. Three years ago, they even provided the down payment for the purchase of this building.*

*Martha and John Jack...believed that the mission was good and possible. This was their dream too, and we have done it together. As we said to them on a hundred occasions, "Without them, there wouldn't be us."*

*At least in part to honor them, we will do the best we can to ensure that this Institution lives up to its stated mission of collection, display, education, and conservation. That is our—and their—legacy.*



# NMAC's Current Exhibition

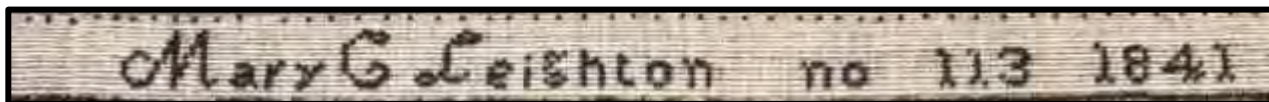
By Melinda Zongor

April 21, 2012 was opening day for the latest NMAC exhibition. Director/Curator Melinda Zongor remarked, "Today's event is about generosity and gratitude."

The coverlets and objects currently on display are recent acquisitions, given by people from all around the country—New Jersey to Alaska. Each descriptive label includes the name and state of the object's donor, and that alone makes for a very interesting study. The exhibition—a truly colorful and graphic, physical illustration

and Maine) and a bust of George Washington (one of several coverlets from John and Martha Jack). Another visitor favorite is a brightly colored Henry Adolf (1815-1907) coverlet (one of four given by Delaware resident Kay Hawthorne just before she passed away). Also included are lovely multi-harness, geometric, star work coverlets, as well as a number of other unusual and very attractive geometric and figured examples.

Related objects on display include an eighteenth-century Bedford County cradle from



of the type of support the Museum receives—is dedicated to those donors.

Robert and Ada Brandegee of Pennsylvania, and a barn frame loom and trundle bed from the Mill Creek Valley Historical Association at the

A highlight of the exhibition is a pristine "weft loop weave" coverlet by New Hampshire weaver Hannah Leathers Wilson (1787-1869), made for Mary C. Leighton in 1841 and numbered 113. Wilson made at least 184 of her amazing coverlets, and we know this because a friend of the Museum owns number 184! The Wilson coverlet was a gift from James and Ellie Beck of Wisconsin, and it arrived only days before the exhibition opening.



Beaver Campus of Penn State University.

The exhibition theme was inspired, in part, by the dedication of the main exhibition gallery in honor of Martha and John Jack, who contributed in many important ways to the establishment and success of the Museum. Another article in this newsletter details that event.

The current exhibition will remain open through the end of 2012. See more exhibition pictures on NMAC's Facebook page!

Other standout coverlets depict a schooner in full sail (gift of Nancy Hillenburg of California