



Martha Skelton: Master Quilter of Mississippi

Mary Elizabeth Johnson

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Like all art forms, quilting has its "masters," and Vicksburg, Mississippi's Martha Butcher Skelton is among them. Noted quilt scholar Mary Elizabeth Johnson chronicles Martha Skelton's life and her development into one of America's foremost quilt artists.

Born in West Virginia, Martha Skelton was reared in Oklahoma. Her interest in quilting began when, as a girl, she watched her mother and aunts make quilts and enjoy needlework. After graduating college and marrying, she moved to Vicksburg and served as a school librarian for a number of years while raising a family. During this time, her quilting began to develop into an art.

Having completed more than two hundred quilts (over ninety of which are photographed here in full color), Skelton has been recognized as a master quilter and teacher of the craft. Twice she was selected to participate in the Smithsonian Institution's Folklife Festival. She was instrumental in establishing the quilting program for the Mississippi State Fair and has taught in almost every Mississippi county, as well as in numerous other states. Two of her quilts are a part of the Museum of the American Quilter's Society's permanent collection, and her quilts are also included in the Mountain Mist quilt collection and the Mississippi Department of Archives and History collection.

Mary Elizabeth Johnson is the author of numerous books on quilting. She lives and works in Montgomery, Alabama. Walt Grayson is an author and host of the public television show Mississippi Roads.

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