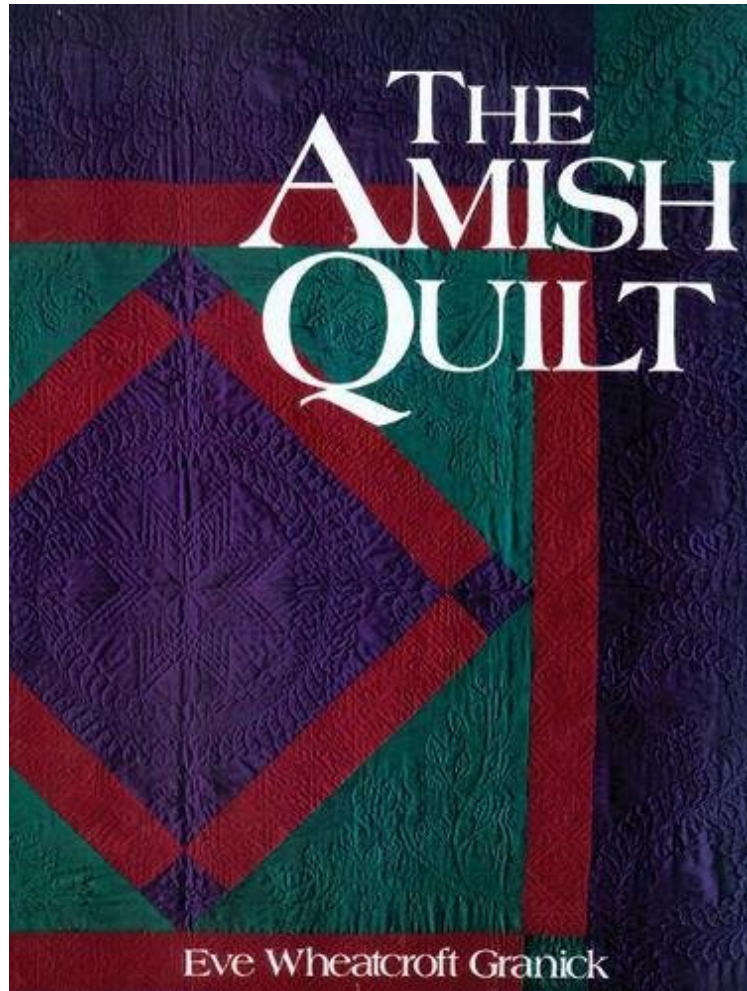


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Amish Quilt

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the Amish and their textile traditions. Much of what is presented here comes from interviews and conversations with Amish families and with people whose lives have touched the Amish community. Research in county courthouse records and public libraries provided other valuable data and insight. Finally, there is the information based on seeing these quilts in Amish homes, watching them come out of blanket chests or off beds. When women were asked about the age or history of their quilts they had much to say. By listening to their stories, handling thousands of quilts, examining fabrics and comparing quilts made in different communities, we can begin to develop a larger sense of the Amish and their quilts. -Eve Wheatcroft Granick

"Granick has taken the quilts-many of which look op-art modern-out of the realm of the strictly artistic and given them a history." -The Philadelphia Inquirer "Tradition and photography are artfully intertwined in this highly accomplished book." -Antiques Today

About the Author Eve Granick's interest in the Amish began in the mid-1970s when she traveled throughout the Midwest with her antique dealer husband, David Wheatcroft, in search of Amish quilts. Buying and selling Amish quilts led to collecting them, and inevitably to a curiosity about the milieu in which they were produced. Eve grew up in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, and received a B.F.A. from Washington University, St. Louis, and a M.F.A. for the University of Iowa, Iowa City. She lives in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Preface Much has been written about the Amish and their quilts in recent years. Quilts have been collected, photographed, displayed, bought and sold for some time now. Today there are only a few old quilts left in the homes of Amish families. Many Amish have sold their quilts to pickers and antique dealers who have filled the marketplace with Amish quilts of all ages, sizes, and descriptions. In the rush to gather these quilts for sale, often little attention has been paid to the oral and written histories that accompany these textiles. The Amish Quilt draws together the body of available information about the Amish and their textile traditions. Much of what is presented here comes from interviews and conversations with Amish families and with people whose lives have touched the Amish community. Research in county courthouse records and public libraries provided other valuable data and insight. Finally, there is the information based on seeing these quilts in Amish homes, watching them come out of blanket chests or off beds. When women were asked about the age or history of their quilts they had much to say. By listening to their stories, handling thousands of quilts, examining fabrics and comparing quilts made in different communities, we can begin to develop a larger sense of the Amish and their quilts. --Eve Wheatcroft Granick, April 1989

Introduction The quilts made by Amish women in the years between the last quarter of the 19th century and the midpoint of the 20th century represent a unique achievement in American quilting. The work of a small and relatively insulated group of women, these textiles are an expression of both personal and group sensibilities about the use of color and design. Their creation and use in the home are part of a way of life that centers on simplicity and places a high value on symbolism. Textiles provide visual clues about the interests and concerns of any cultural group. They offer a subtle reflection of the emotional makeup of a group, as well as its individual members. The motifs, colors, and designs in the quilts made by Amish women also reflect the group's history and its collective outlook on life. As a society committed to simplicity and humility, the Amish place certain restrictions on the practice of the decorative arts. Rather than being vehicles for bold self-expression or individual achievement, Amish quilts must serve a utilitarian purpose while remaining within a seemingly narrow set of aesthetic boundaries. The Amish are not ascetics; they do value well-made objects and find great satisfaction in the creation of useful and decorative works. They do believe, however, that their enjoyment of the material world must be weighed against the larger claims of their religious faith. The tensions that arise out of the effort to maintain a proper balance between pride and humility, and between simplicity and more complex, "worldly" choices are well expressed in Amish quilts. We enjoy these quilts for their decorative or visual impact and marvel at their surprising similarity to works of modern art. Their appeal is immediate and apparent to even the most casual viewer. If, however, we limit our interest solely to what we see, we lose a large measure of the meaning of these textiles. By examining Amish quilts in the light of their particular cultural and historical background, we can understand and appreciate both the objects themselves and the unique society that has created them. As a group that has chosen to live apart from the ways of the world, the Amish must be both aware of and sensitive to that world which they strive to avoid. Amish quilts reflect both the interaction with and the avoidance of "English" culture, which the group has practiced successfully for two and a half centuries. These quilts bridge two worlds, enriching our vision of the Amish community and illuminating the larger world of American quilting and textile arts.