

## Vermont's Quilting Connections

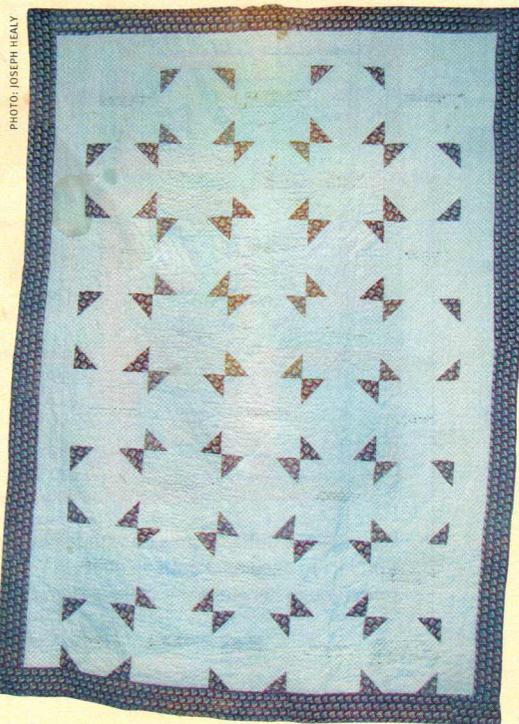
**M**ARY RYAN OF RUTLAND is a leading member of Vermont's quilting community. A trustee emeritus of the Vermont Quilt Festival and member of The Vermont Quiltsearch, she first took a quilting class in 1974 when her children were small. As is typical of many American women, she grew up with family-made quilts. But Ryan has transcended her initial casual interest in quilting. She is now a prolific artist, teacher, and businesswoman with a line of quilting patterns, Mary K. Ryan Design.

Ryan and her friend and business partner Jan Snelling McTaggart created the design for "Feathered Star," which won both a blue ribbon and a Judge's Choice award at the International Quilt Festival in Houston, the largest quilt show in the world. This intricate design containing 6,000 pieces has been featured in the book, *Quilts Galore* and in several quilt magazines. (See "Feathered Star" at [www.vermontel.com/~tcmkryan/patterns.html](http://www.vermontel.com/~tcmkryan/patterns.html).)

Vermont's own Shelburne Museum has a collection of hundreds of quilts spanning the 18th to the 20th centuries. A showcase quilting exhibit, "Art of the Needle: 100 Masterpiece Quilts," debuted in May 2003 and is a result of three years of exhaustive research by the museum curators, including chief curator, Henry Joyce. (For more information, check out [www.shelburne-museum.org](http://www.shelburne-museum.org).)

Vermont even has a quilt with a cult following—the "Dear Jane" Quilt. Via Internet Web sites and chat rooms, "Dear Jane" fans stay in touch and share progress over their attempts at duplicating the Jane A. Stickle quilt. What sets this quilt apart is its 225 distinctive geometrical designs—no two squares are the same.

The quilt rests in the Bennington Museum ([www.benningtonmuseum.org](http://www.benningtonmuseum.org)), where it's put on public display from the end of September through October each year. Visitors travel from all over the world to see the quilt, to visit Jane Stickle's gravesite, and to learn more about the life of this very poor Vermont farm woman who in 1863 completed this remarkable, innovative masterpiece.



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The Vermont Historical Society Museum has the Fairbanks Civil War quilt on display. The quilt was made by Carolyn Fairbanks for her soldier husband, Luke (shown above).

### The Fairbanks Civil War Quilt

Sometimes as a museum curator you just get lucky, and Jacqueline Calder, curator of the Vermont Historical Society (VHS), considers herself very lucky indeed. In 1987, an historical society in Pennsylvania donated a quilt to the VHS because it appeared to have a Vermont connection. In conjunction with Calder's research for a new Civil War Exhibit at the Vermont Historical Society Museum in Montpelier, she made a remarkable discovery: the donated quilt was made during the Civil War by 18-year-old Carolyn Bowen Fairbanks for her husband, Luke, a Civil War soldier. It carries two stamps, one from Brandon, and the other from the U.S. Sanitary Commission; it's signed "Mrs. L.B. Fairbanks," and is adorned with Bible verses written in ink. Calder estimates that this quilt may be one of only a handful of the nearly quarter-million quilts made for the Sanitary Commission during the Civil War that still exist today. Through the Vermont Civil War Web site ([www.vermontcivilwar.org](http://www.vermontcivilwar.org)), Calder connected with the great-grandson of Carolyn and Luke, Grant Fairbanks, who provided the VHS with several high-quality family photos. The images and the quilt itself are on exhibit at the VHS Museum at the Pavilion Building in Montpelier. For more information, go to [www.vermonthistory.org](http://www.vermonthistory.org).

—C.F.