

## AUNT LANE'S CRAZY QUILT

Lane Bush Lewis (1892-1984), the youngest daughter of Cecilia Jackson and Jacob Bush, (see footnote), is the last survivor of their nine children. The year is 1983 and Lane sits behind her electric sewing machine attaching small pieces of colorful fabric onto a white cotton square. The 12 x 12 inch piece of worn bed sheet has long ago seen its better days but is perfect for use in making Crazy Quilts.

For the first time since she was born, Lane, in the late 1960s, was left alone to occupy the family homestead by herself. Some twenty year later, one sees that she has adjusted to living a routine life which satisfies her. The sewing of Crazy Quilts occupies the majority of each day for Lane, only surpassed by a phone call from a niece or a friend.

A beloved person of long standing in a community of relatives, Lane receives many phone calls from people who check on her welfare. Lane is also the pivot person to keep relatives up to date on family happenings or family stories from the past. Despite the need for assistance from a walker, her mind and general health are quite remarkable for a person of 91 years. She survives for another decade.

The highlight of the week is when a person comes to call and brings a plastic bag of fabric pieces of all colors and odd shaped sizes. Lane cheerfully stops her "busy work," as she calls her sewing, to talk with the visitor about current affairs of the community or to answer questions regarding the family's ancestors. If Lane has made a pie or baked cookies, the visitor is urged to share the treat before departing.

The Japanese introduced the idea of "crazy quilting" to the Americans at the 1876 Centennial Exhibit in Philadelphia. By the 1880s, the asymmetrical pattern of patches had become a fad in the United States among the financially affluent families. The fabrics of choice were small pieces of velvet, taffeta and silk. To these expensive fabrics were added embroidery stitching, buttons, ribbons and lace.

Pioneer women would make bed quilts and clothing from patching small pieces of less worn cotton and homespun fabrics into geometric patterns. The patchwork was a necessity for the family while the Crazy Quilt was cherished in the home for two main reasons: 1) The women admired the expensive fabrics; 2) The women could display their handiwork skills. Early Crazy Quilts have survived because the quilts were display pieces and rarely used as an item in the home.

Lane's Crazy Quilts are much more practical for home use. She joins the pieces together by a machine instead of hand stitching enabling a finished product in just a day or two. Embroidery stitching done by hand on each of her quilts would consume far more time than practical although smaller pillows and a few quilts provided a delightful outlet to showcase her variety of stitches.

Most of the fabrics Lane uses are machine washable. Bonded knit material, chemically made, was the rage in the 1970s and 1980s not the natural fibers of cotton, silk or wool. Crazy quilting provides a small extra income for Lane but is also a hobby to display her artistic talent which draws the admiration of many people by displaying her creative ability in color placement, texture and handiwork.

Lane Bush Lewis died 31 Jan 1984 but lived a life that touched so many people over generations. Memories of a great matriarch come to mind when a Crazy Quilts or Crazy Pillow cover is observed. Even the mention of her name by a person who was fortunate enough to know her brings forth a story to tell of what goodness Lane did for someone. Lane is admired for her loving, sharing and caring ways as well as her domestic skills of cooking and sewing. In this respect, Lane was much like her mother, Cecilia Jackson Bush Bonnet.

Footnote: Cecilia Jackson married Jacob Bush on 01 Feb 1871 at Marietta, OH having eloped from their families in Lewis County, WV. Cecilia had just turned 16 years of age two months earlier.