

# Donation of the Month

**Help One Another Club Quilt**

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Of all the skills associated with women, sewing has been most common. Besides being a skill of crucial domestic importance as quilts were needed to keep warm; sewing also encouraged creativity. While some women created quilts quietly at home, many women gathered together and worked together to create one quilt. Called quilting bees these gatherings allowed for social interactions through conversation, food and play at the end of the work. In many cases the quilting bees were by invitation

only and getting invited to one meant acceptance into the community.

Beginning in the 1840s a premium was placed on emotion and sentiment as part of a woman's growth and character. One way to nurture this was by women gathering to share experiences and engage in mutual supportive roles. This era saw the rise of what are now known as friendship quilts. Friendship quilts come in various types from those with a very specific pattern to those more creative and free in their workings. One type of friendship quilt is the album quilt. These quilts worked like autograph books, allowing those working on the quilt to write their name within their block or for one to gather the names of their friends to keep as a memento.

Most friendship quilts were created to show the skills and personalities of a group. Sometimes they allowed the women to express their political or social views, but most often they were created to mark a special occasion. This friendship quilt was made by the Help One Another Club. The club was founded by Elsie Allred Bland. The 35 blocks were sewn at the club's monthly meetings. In order to create a uniform quilt she provided the square blocks of high-grade muslin. Everyone in the group is represented even if they did not quilt. This means Elsie did 8 blocks herself which included one for her mother, mother-in-law and sister.

Working together made light work of the long process of making a quilt. Each sewer's skill helped create a masterpiece of creativity and beauty. Today, quilting bees are harder to find; but there are plenty of women out there still creating quilts of all types.