



Mother Emma L. Randolph

April 10, 1919 ~ May 2, 2007

While viewing Public Broadcasting Television network's airing of "The Quilts of Gee's Bend, Alabama" in October 2006, long time family friend, Ted Gary, immediately noticed similarities in the women of Gee's Bend and Mother Randolph. He contacted PBS to purchase a copy of the documentary. She watched this documentary during the 2006 Thanksgiving festivities and immediately identified and connected with the quiltmakers. The broadcast DVD became one of her most precious treasures.

Quilters - A Collective History

Making quilts was considered a domestic responsibility for women throughout much of the twentieth century. Many women - black and white - trained or apprenticed their craft with their mother, female relatives or friends and others have been virtually self-taught. A large family could require many, many quilts to be made over the course of their lives. Although quilting was an art, it was also a skill used for survival.

The process of "piecing" the quilt "top" is considered to be very personal. The "top" is the side that faces up on the bed and normally completed by the quilter alone. There is a sentimental value placed in each piece, its placement reflects a singular artistic vision. The process of sewing together the completed top, batting (stuffing), and the back was many times performed communally among small groups of women.

Quilters develop a distinctive style based on African-American traditions. Many times, the distinctions and skills are passed down through generations.

The Quiltmaker of Elkmont, Alabama Mother Emma L. Randolph

During an exhibit featuring "Quiltmakers of Gee's Bend" at The Indianapolis Museum of Art, her daughter, Helen Randolph, had an opportunity to share her mother's quiltmaking story. A Professor from Indiana University was so moved by her story, Mother Emma Randolph was to be featured along with other quiltmakers in a continuation of the Alabama quiltmakers which would have included a personal interview and documentation of her life story. Although contacted in November 2006 to arrange the date to begin "her story", her health began to fail before the documentary could be completed.

The Randolph children fondly remember being placed into bed by their mother following long days of work and falling asleep while she was in her favorite rocker busy piecing a quilt. Only to find during the night, they had been provided a warm covering of love in a newly pieced quilt.

Her story is like many others. It's our desire to share her story so others can have the opportunity to remember our mother in a way which will be cherished by us for years to come and also remember others who have a similar untold story.