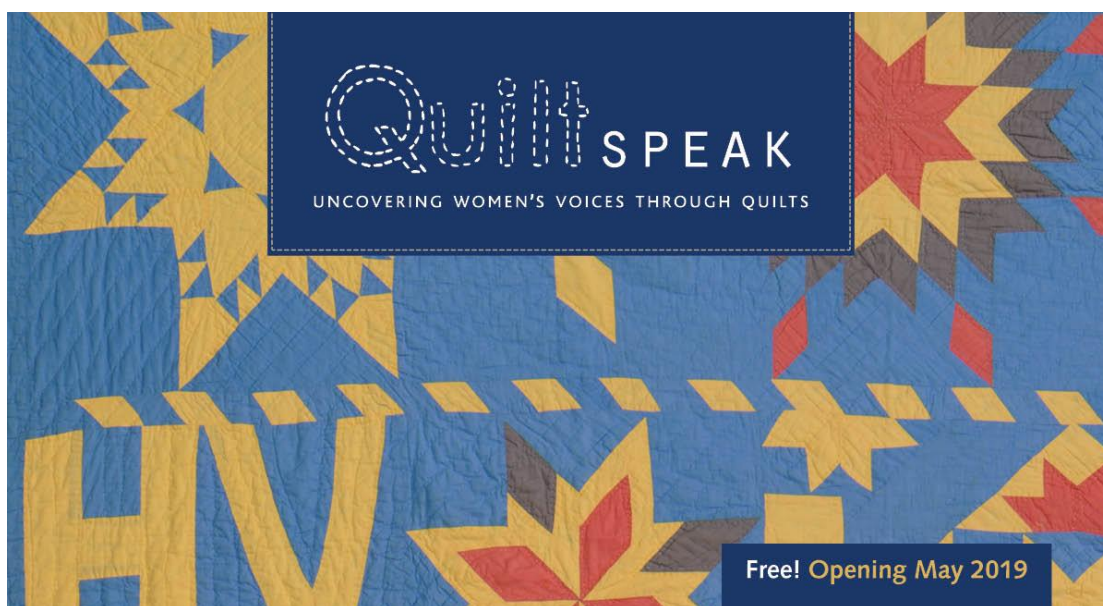


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**History Threaded Through Time**  
*QuiltSpeak: Uncovering Women's Voices Through Quilts*



**Video:** [Diana Bell-Kite, curator behind \*QuiltSpeak\*, gives a little background on how the exhibit came to be and what the public can learn.](#)

**April 8, 2019 (RALEIGH, N.C.)** — On May 4, the North Carolina Museum of History will unveil its newest exhibit, [\*QuiltSpeak: Uncovering Women's Voices Through Quilts\*](#). Historically, women's voices have been silenced by illiteracy, exhaustion, racial oppression, and gender inequity. Men may have written most of the history books, but women expressed themselves too—sometimes through the quilts they made.

Did you know that quilts could speak? Quilts proclaimed status, and wealthy women perfected their craft with expensive imported fabrics, communicating their fine needlework skill and ample free time through their creations. Women of more modest means conveyed their determination to provide for their families by upcycling grain sacks and tailors' samples into quilting materials.

Women told their life stories through quilts; they marked births, weddings, and deaths with quilting.

“Each quilt in the exhibit represents an example of female self-expression, whether consciously or less intentionally, and each has a story to tell,” said exhibit curator Diana Bell-Kite. “By uncovering the long-silenced voices of the women who created these bedcovers, *QuiltSpeak* ultimately seeks to expand and complicate our understandings of who made history and how.”

Exhibition visitors can see quilts come to life with films, as well as fun, hands-on activities. Attendees will learn how to “speak quilt” with our interactive quilting glossary, become quilt sleuths to uncover what the physical qualities of quilts reveal about their makers, piece patterns together, and share stories about the quilts in their own lives.

The North Carolina Museum of History will be featuring 40 unique quilts that give a voice to untold stories throughout history. Read on for six of our most interesting yarns:

**Give Me That Old-Timey Quilting!** – Elizabeth Jacobs once stated that she was born loving to quilt. She especially loved the “old-timey” quilts that her grandmother had made. Elizabeth’s grandmother taught her how to piece quilt tops when she was a child. Jacobs was especially fond of finding different fabric scraps for her quilts, believing that the most beautiful quilts had the smallest pieces. As a member of the Waccamaw Siouan community, Jacobs wanted to pass down her heritage to her children and grandchildren. She often made multiple quilts for her family members, commemorating births, weddings, and housewarming celebrations.

**History in Pictures** – Maude McCauley, born 1884 in Alamance County, had always admired two things: history and her grandmother’s quilts. Wanting to create beautiful quilts of her own, she embroidered and appliquéd her favorite historical moments on quilting squares, many of which centered around North Carolina’s history. Twenty-four blocks later, McCauley had created an incredibly interesting quilt that read like a history book!

**Quilting Bridezilla** – Upper-class white ladies of the 19th century often spent their days perfecting their sewing skills. Quilts were made to celebrate momentous life events such as weddings. Louisa Green Furches wanted to make a quilt for her upcoming nuptials, and she wanted the quilt to be perfect. Louisa pulled out any stitches that her sister made when she was trying to help. The quilt took months to make, and Louisa worked until her hands were sore. Her efforts paid off, however, as her quilt is believed to have won a local quilting competition at a county fair.

**A Life in Stitches** – Eliza Helen Rogers Arrington grew up on her family’s cotton farm in Cary, North Carolina, in the early 20th century. Her parents were proud to own their own land during a period when many African Americans worked as sharecroppers or tenant farmers. When she got married, her mother-in-law taught her how to quilt. Eliza quickly grew to love the art and often made a variety of everyday and special occasion quilts for her family. Arrington did not believe in wasting materials and often used fabric scraps, old dresses, and feed sacks in her quilts. Eliza’s children would look back fondly at the memories of their mother quilting. Eliza would often tell stories passed down

through generations while sewing a quilt in her lap. Eliza's quilts are a testament to her life: her quilts reveal her stories, her values, and her dreams.

**20th-Century Upcycling** – Why buy materials when you can find them? Espie and Isaac Williams owned I. I. Williams Groceries and Dry Goods store in early-20th-century Maiden, North Carolina. Espie would scour the store's old suit catalogs for fabric swatches and samples. After collecting over 400 wool swatches, she created a beautiful bedcover for her family.

**The Grand Old Flag** – In order to show their patriotism and dedication to the World War II effort, members of the women's Bible class of the Epworth Methodist Church in Hyde County bonded together to create a patriotic quilt. The quilt featured 12 48-star United States flags. The women who created the quilt also worked hard to sell tickets to a war-bond fund-raiser where the quilt would be raffled off. After the war was won, the women's patriotism lived on through that red-white-and-blue quilt.

**For information about the NC Museum of History**, a Smithsonian-affiliated museum, call 919-814-7000 or access [ncmuseumofhistory.org](http://ncmuseumofhistory.org) or follow on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Google+](#) or [YouTube](#).

### **About the NC Museum of History**

The N.C. Museum of History, a Smithsonian Affiliate, is located at 5 E. Edenton Street in downtown Raleigh. Hours are Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. The museum collects and preserves artifacts of North Carolina history and educates the public on the history of the state and the nation through exhibits and educational programs. Each year more than 400,000 people visit the museum to see some of the 150,000 artifacts in the museum collection. The Museum of History, within the Division of State History Museums, is part of the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

### **About Smithsonian Affiliations**

In association with the Smithsonian since 2006, the North Carolina Museum of History is part of a select group of museums, cultural, educational, and arts organizations that share the Smithsonian's resources with the nation. Smithsonian Affiliations is a national outreach program that develops long-term collaborative partnerships with museums, educational, and cultural organizations to enrich communities with Smithsonian resources. More information is available at [www.affiliations.si.edu](http://www.affiliations.si.edu).

### **About the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources**

The NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (NCDNCR) is the state agency with a vision to be the leader in using the state's natural and cultural resources to build the social, cultural, educational and economic future of North Carolina. NCDNCR's mission is to improve the quality of life in our state by creating opportunities to experience excellence in the arts, history, libraries and nature in North Carolina by stimulating learning, inspiring creativity, preserving the state's history, conserving the state's natural heritage, encouraging recreation and cultural tourism, and promoting economic development.

NCDNCR includes 27 historic sites, seven history museums, two art museums, two science museums, three aquariums and Jennette's Pier, 39 state parks and recreation areas, the NC Zoo, the nation's first state-supported Symphony Orchestra, the State Library, the State Archives, the NC Arts Council, State Preservation Office, and the Office of State Archaeology, along with the Division of Land and Water Stewardship. For more information, please call 919-814-6800 or visit [www.ncdcr.gov](http://www.ncdcr.gov).

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