The Fruits of Her Hands: Baltimore Album Quilts
as Manifestation of Early Nineteenth-Century American Patriotism

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A Thesis in the Field of History

for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

June 2002

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Abstract

This study investigates the development of the Baltimore Album style of quilting as a result of the developing sense of American nationalism in the early nineteenth century. It also examines how the conflicts that would erupt into civil war just after the midway point of the century brought about the demise of the Baltimore album quilt era. Included in this examination is a review of quilting in America and where the Baltimore album quilts fit into that framework.

Evaluation of how the development of the nation prior to 1840 impacted the designs in the Baltimore album quilts includes examination of the establishment of a sense of nationhood and how the women of the era expressed their patriotism through their quilts. Also examined are the technological developments impacting this style of quilting and how those developments helped to redefine the role of the women who made these quilts.

Analysis is included of how the national controversy over the issues propelling the country into civil war changed the focus of these quilters, leading to the cessation of the creation of Baltimore album style of quilts. This study includes a discussion of the effects of industrialization, urbanization, and westward expansion on this quilt era and its demise. This study focuses on placing the phenomenon of the Baltimore album quilts within the context of the socio-political atmosphere in which they were created and shows how they illustrate early nineteenth-century American society in microcosm.

Dedication

When my mother was a young girl her mother was sent to a sanitarium for tuberculosis treatment. In the ensuing years my mother and her brothers were cared for by a variety of family members and friends. The first quilt I ever had was made by one of these generous caregivers, Leora Stark. Leora was a remarkable woman who provided love and stability in my mother's life when her family was torn apart by illness, time, and distance.

"Aunt Tora," as we called her, made utilitarian quilts. Although few of them survive today, I can say that they were not as intricate in design as the Baltimore Album Quilts, nor were the fabrics particularly well-coordinated. She used what she had at hand or was shared by others. She kept track of how long she worked on a quilt, sometimes counting the hours, sometimes the stitches. She would tell what she thought about during the long hours of quilting,and she would document where the fabric had come from and how many pieces comprised the whole. She valued them and what she put of herself into them, and those of us who were lucky enough to receive one of her quilts loved them well. My family has one of her quilts dated 1911, when she was but ten years old. Another, a tulip quilt, was made for my parents' twenty-fifth wedding anniversary in 1975, when Aunt Tora was 74. She quilted throughout her life, spanning the majority of the twentieth century. I often think of a comment of another quilt maker when I think of Aunt Tora's quilts:

> It took me more than 20 years, nearly 25, I reckon, in the evenings after supper when the children were all put to bed. My whole life is in that quilt…all my joys and my sorrows are stitched into those little pieces…. I tremble sometimes when I remember what that quilt knows about me. (*America's Heritage Quilts*, p. 181)

This thesis is dedicated, with gratitude, to Aunt Tora's memory.

Acknowledgments

Quilting has brought me untold hours of contemplation, introspection, and gratification. It is a hobby that borders on obsession. When people ask me, “What do you do?” I tell them I’m a quilter who works in an office to pay the mortgage and buy quilting supplies. Through quilting I have met wonderful people—fellow quilters, students, talented teachers, dedicated researchers, and historians. Quilting also provided a focus for the completion of my graduate education that had been lacking for more than a decade.

During the process of this research I have become indebted to numerous people. I am indebted to Martha Supnik, library volunteer and webmaster of the New England Quilt Museum, for her invaluable guidance in gaining access to rare books held in the museum’s collection. I am also indebted to Christopher Atkins in Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts Permissions Department for his assistance with obtaining permission to use the images of the Archer quilt.

My appreciation goes to the dedicated staffs of Widener, Baker, Grossman, and Lamont Libraries at Harvard University, for their patience and guidance.

I owe the ladies of my Tuesday night sewing circle and the members of the Thimbles and Friends Quilt Guild untold thanks for their encouragement, humor, and support. Many thanks go to my friend Nancy Moynihan, who traveled with me to view the Baltimore Album exhibition at the Maryland Historical Society and loaned me several very useful reference books from her collection. I owe a special thank you to Nancy’s sister-in-law Ann Moynihan, who warmly and cheerfully opened her home to us while we were in Maryland and drove us wherever we needed to go.

The staff at the Maryland Historical Society, entrusted with the care and protection of so many of these treasured quilts, did a wonderful job with their Baltimore Album Quilt Exhibition in the summer of 2001. The fortunate coincidence in timing of my undertaking this thesis with the opening of that exhibit meant that I was able to view firsthand more of the original album quilts than I ever would have otherwise been able to see. I am both fortunate and very grateful. The dedicated staff at the Maryland Historical Society provided me with invaluable guidance and information. I am particularly grateful for the suggestions made by Nancy E. Davis, Deputy Director of Collections, and the assistance of Ruth Mitchell in the Permissions Department.

I owe more than mere "thank you's" to my friends and colleagues, Christina Hamilton, for encouraging me to "get on with it" and to Sharon Coleman, Delia Gerraughty, and Elaine Hourihan for patiently listening to me babble about titles, chapter divisions, etc. I am also grateful for the enthusiastic guidance of Dr. Donald Ostrowski, ALM Research Advisor.

To Michael Shinagel, I owe my deepest thanks for his many years of encouragement and support, both in ways that are tangible and in the gift of time.

I owe my family for their belief that I would eventually find my way to completing this process, particularly my mother, Janet Hime. She is an excellent example of what is meant by the old adage, "You never know unless you try."

And to my husband, David, who supports me in ways large and small, all I can say is, "I.L.Y."

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I.

Introduction

The first introduction for this thesis was written prior to the terrorist attacks on the United States on the morning of September 11, 2001. In the wake of the events of that horrific day and the resulting surge in displays of patriotism nationwide, I have found it necessary to re-evaluate my perceptions of what such displays of patriotism represent and how they might compare with the examples of American patriotism portrayed in the Baltimore album quilts of the mid-nineteenth century. Prior to that event, I most likely would have defined patriotism as a manifestation of national pride, a sense of belonging, a statement of bravado over political and economic accomplishment. The concept of unity symbolized by a waving flag would have been founded in the spirit of a celebration of democracy and in a fulfilling sense of the success of the vision of the founding fathers of this country. I did not understand then that displays of patriotism might also be rooted in the process of sharing overwhelming grief and fear. This modified perception must now be accommodated in the scope of my understanding of what patriotism means. As I examine these quilts and how they manifest the spirit of the times in which they were created the process takes on a new complexity.

The impact that modern technology has had on the quilting community in the last few years would merit a dissertation all its own. Quilters are connected instantly via the Internet and share quilting ideas, techniques, patterns, and problem solving in a faster time-span that it takes to thread a needle. There are quilting chat rooms, forums, listservs, and newsgroups where quilters from every conceivable location can connect and discuss their craft. Within twenty-four hours of the events of the morning of September 11, there were literally scores of endeavors

underway for quilters to participate in a wide variety of projects related to the attack. These projects ranged from making quilts for distribution to victims, for raffling to raise funds for relief efforts, to providing quilt patterns in a wide variety of patriotic themes, to creating memorials to the dead. The phenomenon of the Baltimore album quilts being examined in this thesis, while gorgeous in their design and execution, also were made with a purpose. Rarely were these quilts created solely as an item to cover a bed and keep someone warm. They were momentos given to people traveling far away in uncertain times. They honored dead war heroes and they made profound statements about what being an American meant to the women who created them. As I will examine in the pages to follow, in many ways the quilts being made in aftermath of the autumn of 2001 have much in common with the quilts created by the ladies of the Baltimore area in the middle part of the nineteenth century.

II.

Quilting in America: An Overview

Although today quilting is widely perceived to be an American folk art, it is an ancient technique of manipulating layers of textiles to provide warmth and protection. In ancient Egypt (circa 3000 BC) armor consisted of a belt around the torso that was reinforced by quilting. The Crusaders took back to Europe with them the idea of quilted garments they observed during their travels and adapted quilting designs for sleepwear and undergarments. Written records of European quilted items date from the twelfth century, but being made of perishable materials, few early quilted items have survived. Contrary to popular belief, Europeans did not introduce quilted items to the Americas. Indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica used quilting extensively in their clothing well before the arrival of Europeans.[1]

From the time of the earliest European colonists there have been bed quilts in America. Dutch and English settlers brought the first quilts here.[2] American-made quilts have evolved over the course of the development of the country and, when examined for style, fabric content, pattern, design, method of execution, and purpose, are reflective of our history.[3] Fabric was a highly prized commodity both during the colonial period and throughout the early years of the Republic. This value is indicated by the diaries women kept of the fabric they had in their households and by the listings of family textiles found in wills. Details of the estates of the deceased often contained long lists of textile items, including linens, bedding, and quilts.[4] For example, when George Washington's mother bequeathed a blue and white quilt to him, its specific mention in her will showed that she considered it among her most valued possessions.[5]

According to quilt historian Laura Fisher, there are two perspectives that can be employed when evaluating American quilts. The first is from an artistic point of view that evaluates pattern, design, color, and workmanship. The second is to consider the significance the quilts represent in terms of the historical context. Using the same elements of pattern, design, materials, and workmanship, and including subject matter, quilts are analyzed by how they evoke a certain timeframe or how they illustrate changes in lifestyle, including advancements in technology.[6] Much research has been done on the genre known as Baltimore album quilts following Fisher's first perspective. This research has focused on the striking designs of the quilts, the source of patterns, speculation about the creators (including theories regarding whether there was one major designer or several), but examinations of these quilts to evaluate their historical context has, to date, been surface. This thesis will view the Baltimore album quilts utilizing Fisher's second perspective to determine how they manifest American society, cultures, and political climate of the period.

For an understanding of the development of quilting in America in general, and specifically where Baltimore album quilts fit into the overall timeframe, a brief overview is necessary. For the purpose of this introduction, ten categories of American quilts are identified. Some of these categories are defined by chronology while others are identified by content. As will be demonstrated in the later chapter focusing on the Baltimore album quilts, some quilts can be categorized by both methods.

The earliest quilts in the American colonies were two whole pieces of fabric layered with some type of filler, often wool, in between. Stitching through the layers held them together. These three layers created warmth and the stitching was performed in a manner that created a decorative design. The stitching design is what is referred to as the quilting. Some of the

decorative quilting designs were simple matters of horizontal and vertical lines but others were elaborate in their detail. These early quilts, referred to as “whole-cloth” quilts, were usually made out of fabric imported from England, but were also sometimes made out of a textile called linsey-woolsey, a combination of flax and wool, produced in the colonies.[7]

While most of the textiles the early colonists needed were imported, the settlers did grow flax to be harvested and spun into fiber for weaving, and the sheep they bred for mutton also provided wool. Producing textiles was labor intensive, however, and the colonists were never able to produce enough fabric to meet demands.[8] Because the fabric they were able to produce had to be used for more immediate purposes, such as clothing, quilts made from linsey-woolsey were less common than those of imported fabric.[9]

Imported Indian block prints were a highly prized commodity during the colonial period. The block prints featured large and elaborate floral motifs. Eventually the colonial quilter began to cut sections of these motifs out and sew them on top of their whole-cloth quilts. The center of the quilt would become a medallion of the floral motif and often smaller motifs would be added around the edges to create a border. The stitching that held the quilt together would sometimes echo the floral motifs in the prints. The practice of sewing one fabric on top of another is called appliqué.[10]

The style of appliquéing these intricate floral motifs was called *broderie perse* and remained popular throughout the colonial period and into the beginning of the nineteenth century. The *broderie perse* quilts were primarily for show or for use by special guests and were made by the more affluent members of society who could both afford the Indian print fabric and who had the time to create such pieces.[11] As will be explained in a later chapter, the Baltimore album quilts are direct descendants of the early *broderie perse* bed coverings.

Most Americans today, when asked to describe a quilt, would probably identify it as a piece made up of scraps of fabric frugally saved and sewn together into patchwork. In fact, according to some historians, the patchwork image of the American quilt and its symbolism as an example of Americans making the most with the little they had has extended back into the colonial past and created the myth that patchwork was the beginning of American quilting. In his book, *The American Quilt: A History of Cloth and Comfort 1750-1950*, Roderick Kiracofe explains that historians such as Sally Garoutte have challenged the "long cherished notion" that it was the early colonists' need for warm bedding that inspired them to piece together scraps of fabric into quilts. As noted earlier, textile production in the colonies was a time-consuming undertaking and the reality is that most colonial women were too busy "with the tasks necessary for basic survival, such as growing and preserving food, to spend precious time making quilts…."[12] Kiracofe confirms that the most-often used style of quilts during the colonial period were whole-cloth or *broderie perse* and that patchwork did not come into vogue until after 1800.[13]

As the patchwork style of quilts flourished on the western frontier, in the developing urban areas along the eastern seaboard appliqué was still the style of choice. Appliqué was beginning to move, however, beyond the method of cutting out the large motifs from the Indian block prints to cutting out small pieces of fabric for each element of a design. Each leaf or each petal of a flower was now cut from a separate fabric. Using many fabrics and carefully sewing them into place created an overall picture. The height of popularity of appliqué quilts culminated in the era of the Baltimore album, which will be examined in detail in chapter six.

Quilts made in the third quarter of the nineteenth century were, by and large, somber creations of simple geometric patchwork. Unlike the scrap fabric patchwork found in homes on

the western frontier, these patchwork quilts used prints in repetition chosen specifically for that particular project. Great care was given to where each fabric was used so that there would be continuity throughout the quilt design. Created just before and during the Civil War, the ebullience and celebration of the appliqué quilts are gone, replaced by tones of brown and rusty reds. Fabrics produced at this time are often “madder” prints. Madder has black or brown added to the color that darkens and tones down the hue.[14] The quilts made with madder fabrics were somber affairs, quite reflective of the wartime era. Quilts were produced in large numbers, both North and South, throughout the war, but very few of them survive today. Many quilts made to accompany soldiers as they headed off to battle were used as burial shrouds to wrap them as they were laid in their graves.[15]

Following the Civil War and leading into the twentieth century, quilts again became ornate, but now they contained sections of patchwork made from lush velvets, satins, and brocades and elaborately embellished with silk ribbon flowers and beads. The socially conscious Victorians wanted their homes to be places of elegance, culture, harmony, and spiritual enrichment. Believing that an attractive home contributed to the beauty of the soul, Victorians approached home decorating as a solemn duty.[16] Victorians covered almost all of their belongings with something extra. Lace, ribbon, ruffles, and fringe appeared in profusion on everything from garments to pillows. Crazy quilting was an ideal development for this opulent period. Called “crazy quilts” because of their helter-skelter design, these pieces are comprised of delicate and fragile fabrics and embellished with sentimental messages and keepsakes of ribbons and cloth. Although their construction made them nearly useless as quilts, they served as elegant ornaments in the jumble of the Victorian home. Oriental influence in the crazy quilting style is abundant. In 1876 the Centennial Exposition was an important influence as the Japanese

pavilion there was immensely successful. Visited by nearly ten million people, the pavilion introduced Americans to new design concepts. Even the word "Japanese" became synonymous with fashion as period fabrics, wallpapers, and embroidered pieces reflected the popularity of Japanese themes. The crazy quilts included fans, swallows in flight, owls, and kimono-clad figures.[17]

Although sometimes overlooked in evaluating the evolution of American quilting, Amish quilts have had profound and lasting influence. The forty-year period from 1880 to 1920 was the beginning of the Amish and Mennonite (an offshoot of the Amish tradition) settlements in the United States. When the Amish came to America, their separateness and plain ways gave them a unique approach to quilting. The first Amish families in America were among the thousands of German immigrants who settled in the vicinity of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. They had no heritage of quilting but adapted their traditional folk art motifs to the crafts of their non-German speaking neighbors. The subsequent chapter on the Baltimore album quilts will discuss in more detail the influence of German folk art on that genre of quilts. The Amish quilts were notable for their solid color fabrics as well as their graphic designs. In part due to the limited number of colorfast dyes available and in part due to the philosophy that also governed their dress and life-style, the Amish quilts are striking in their bold design that comes from the contrast of the vivid solid-colored fabric against stark black and for the amazing quality of their workmanship.[18] To this day, quilters aspire to attain the high standard set by Amish women in their stitching. While the Amish quilts at the time they were originated did not have influence outside of their confined communities, today they are highly regarded and so dearly prized that the tourist industry that focuses on collecting Amish quilts threatens to change the nature of their society.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, nationwide publication of quilt patterns began to influence American quilters. Quilt makers once limited to regional patterns and local customs were now exposed to ideas from outside sources. Although *Godey's Ladies Book* had been addressing quilting for more than fifty years, it was a new venture for newspapers. The immense popularity of the feature is reflected in a 1930 Gallup survey that named quilt columns as the most popular feature in six major city newspapers.[19] An important player in this field was the *Kansas City Star*, which published editions in five states. Beginning in 1928 the *Star* published a quilt pattern every week for 34 years. Magazines also carried regular articles and patterns on quilting. Marie Webster created original designs that were published in *Ladies Home Journal* from 1911 to 1917. As the result of recent scholarly research her designs have been republished in two volumes for modern quilters. Magazines for farmers and their families also took part in publishing quilting information and farmwomen were among the most devoted and productive quilt makers of the early twentieth century.

Another development during this period was the marketing of patterns and implements for quilting. Sears catalogs advertised perforated quilting stencils with stamping wax to eliminate "the old-fashioned way of marking quilts."[20] Mail order companies, most of them founded and run by enterprising women, provided a host of products for quilters.

The next major era of American quilting occurred during the Great Depression. The distinctive identifying characteristics of quilts of this era are the prints used in the fabrics. The colors are bright and cheery (bubble gum pink and spring green, sunny yellow and vivid blue). The feeling these fabrics convey is one of happiness. Fabric manufacturers of the time were intentionally designing these fabrics to give Depression-era quilters something "happy" to work with in the creation of their quilts. Manufacturers took the same escapist attitude during this time

as movie moguls who made lavish musicals such as those featuring Shirley Temple. The new palette of colors and the influence of design styles such as art deco and art nouveau on traditional patterns resulted in the Depression Era quilts becoming a genre unto themselves.[21]

To enhance an understanding of the importance of quilting in America during this difficult time in our history, it is interesting to note that in 1933 Sears, Roebuck & Co. sponsored a quilt contest to coincide with the Chicago World's Fair. Keyed to the Fair's theme of a "Century of Progress," the contest offered a grand price of $1,000 and drew an amazing 25,000 quilt entries. The contest was an advertising bonanza and greatly influenced the proliferation of quilting. Materials for a quilt, however, were beyond the economic reach of many people during this time, resulting in the use of items they had at hand. Feed and grain producers started printing designs on their feed sacks that were saved and used in quilts.[22] Feed sack quilts today are among the most highly prized items for quilt collectors.

Interest in quilting waned in America during the 1950s and 1960s. All things old-fashioned and handmade were out of style and modern chic demanded store-bought bedcovers made of synthetic material. Although some people continued to make quilts during this time, the general public saw them as having little value and quilts were relegated to the attic or, worse, thrown away. In early 1970 a new magazine, *Quilter's Newsletter*, began to attract attention as a special interest publication. In 1971 an exhibit at the Whitney Museum of Art in New York featured quilts hung on the walls and presented as art and important artifacts of American history.[23] With the Bicentennial in 1976 American folk arts of all kinds experienced a revival. Quilting once again became a popular pastime as Americans celebrated their heritage through needlework. Quilts from the Bicentennial era ranged from full-sized bed quilts to wallhangings to quilted items such as table runners. They evoked an Americana style and most often were

worked in navy blue, red, and white or off-white. Like generations before them, American quilt makers stitched patriotism and political sentiment into commemorative quilts. Cotton replaced synthetics as the fabric of choice.

Message quilts span many years of American history but have in common that they are created to bring attention to a particular issue or for a particular purpose. During the abolitionist movement, quilts were made with anti-slavery themes and were often auctioned off to raise funds for the cause. The same technique was used in the temperance movement and the women's suffrage campaign. In recent times quilt panels three feet by six feet, the size of an average coffin, have been created to memorialize victims of AIDS and to fund the AIDS Names Project, which has helped to educate people about the disease and support AIDS research. The AIDS Names Project has set the standard for other recent quilt projects, including a campaign to produce fabric for quilts to enhance breast cancer awareness and numerous "9-11-01" projects that both memorialize and raise funds for victims' families.

In the last two decades of the twentieth century, quilt popularity grew by leaps and bounds, as did the style of quilts being made. Quilts could be found that still followed traditional patterns and designs. Reproduction fabrics from virtually every era of American quilting were abundant, including Baltimore album prints, Civil War prints, Cocheco prints of the late nineteenth century, Great Depression era reproductions, and most recently, prints reflecting the popular culture of the 1950s, an era when quilting itself was at a nadir. In addition, materials used in American quilting moved beyond cotton to encompass any fiber that could be applied to a surface, whether by thread or some other method of adhesion (although cotton is still the preferred fiber). Art quilts have taken a strong step into American quilting design and rival paintings found in modern art museums by the complexity of their content and structure.

Technological developments revolutionized quilting. A tool that resembles a pizza cutter called a rotary cutter and a special cutting mat enables quilters to cut their fabric in a fraction of the time, thus greatly reducing the preparation that must take place prior to sewing.

The most significant development in recent years is the unprecedented networking developed among quilt enthusiasts not only in the United States, but worldwide. Guilds both local and statewide have organized, as have national and international groups whose focus is quilt research and appreciation. Many states are attempting to catalog antique quilts within their state. The Massachusetts Quilt Documentation Project, begun in 1994, hosts days throughout the year and throughout the state where people can bring quilts made in the Commonwealth prior to 1950 to have them documented. The data are kept at the New England Quilt Museum, which was founded during the Bicentennial year and is housed in the historical textile community of Lowell, Massachusetts.

Quilts today made be utilitarian or for show only. They may be large or miniature, simple or elaborate. Many modern quilt makers use their heritage in the design of their quilts, as evidenced by the work of Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, and recent immigrants from Southeast Asia. In addition to the New England Quilt Museum, other institutions such as the American Quilter's Society Museum in Paducah, Kentucky, and the International Center for Quilt Study located at the University of Nebraska foster quilt research. Huge annual conventions in places like Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Sisters, Oregon, and Houston, Texas, attract thousands of visitors, and a booming industry supports today's quilters. In a recent survey to examine the status of quilting in this country at the beginning of the new millennium it was discovered that there were more than 19 million American quilters over the age of 18 in the year 2000 and quilt-related expenditures equals nearly $2 billion annually.[24]

III.

Industrialization and Its Impact on Urbanization in Nineteenth-Century America

Although the establishment of industry in the new nation encompassed more than just textile production, the development of textile manufacturing was of premiere importance and set the stage for industrialization in the United States for decades to come. The importation of textiles was as important to the colonies as the importation of oil is to the United States today.[25] As relations between England and the colonies moved towards open conflict in the mid-eighteenth century, many Americans sought ways to be less dependent on the mother country for textile goods. Spinning bees and bounties encouraged the manufacture of homespun. Two major factors contributed to the lack of public manufacturing in pre-Revolutionary America. The manufacture of cloth outside of the home carried the connotation of poverty, making its practice undesirable to the majority of people. Also, British laws had long protected England's textile industry and its exports. In 1695, Parliament passed laws prohibiting the emigration of individuals familiar with any aspect of the textile manufacturing process and forbid the export of textile machinery. Heavy penalties were exacted upon those caught exporting models or drawings of machinery from England's textile mills.[26] Still, some people did create textile businesses in America. One such individual was John Hewson.

Hewson, an Englishman who settled in Pennsylvania at the suggestion of Benjamin Franklin, owned a bleaching and printing establishment where he produced the first cotton print in America between 1778 and 1780.[27] Block prints and Indian calicoes imported through England were the most highly prized textile commodities in colonial America. Hewson's prints

were fabulous floral motifs rivaling the highly prized imports, and much coveted. It is said that Martha Washington owned several pieces. There are a few quilts surviving today worked in the *broderie perse* style that contain center medallions cut from Hewson prints and appliquéd to the center.[28]

Once independence was won, the British were even more concerned about guarding their industrial knowledge, wishing to maintain their status as the world's premier textile producers and international traders. At the same time a national debate began in the United States regarding whether or not to follow in England's footsteps and bring the Industrial Revolution to the new nation.[29] The debate broke down along political party lines between the Federalists and the Democratic Republicans.

Alexander Hamilton and the Federalists promoted the establishment of manufacturing, adopting the position that it would be economic suicide for the new country to be dependent on foreigners for their manufactured goods. According to Hamilton, this would put the country in a position of weakness. The Federalists saw industrial development as a means to strengthen the country and provide prosperity.[30] According to the economic historian Robert F. Dalzell, Jr., the Federalists were interested in manufacturing because it offered a much steadier income than trade as well as "more time to pursue political careers, patronize arts, engage in philanthropic and humanitarian ventures."[31]

On the opposing side, Thomas Jefferson penned strong essays calling upon Americans to maintain an agrarian society. Jefferson wrote of the "yeoman ideal" of a rural Republic and cautioned against the establishment of industrial cities like those in England, with all of their attendant problems, including the denigration of factory workers.[32] The debate, which was largely philosophical at the end of the eighteenth century, would grow more urgent in the early

nineteenth century as textile factories multiplied and increasing numbers of Americans worked in them.[33]

In the years immediately following the Revolution, domestic manufacturing and commerce began to steadily grow. Although most Americans still lived in the countryside, more and more were involved in proto-industrialization and rural manufacturing.[34] At the close of the eighteenth century, a young Englishman named Samuel Slater who had apprenticed in England's textile mills, immigrated to America. In a way Slater can be viewed as an industrial spy since he had committed to memory the designs and methods used in the mills where he served his apprenticeship.[35] Eager to find a situation in America where he could replicate those mills and start his own business, he brought with him the knowledge of the technology that would start the textile industry in the United States. In 1790, Slater found financial backing to begin construction of the first textile mill in America at Pawtucket, Rhode Island.[36]

Slater was able to work with a local machinist to produce the parts he needed for the water frame he had memorized. He built a smaller version of the one he had apprenticed on in England and succeeded in mechanizing the cotton carding and spinning processes. Slater's mill was in operation by just before Christmas in 1793.[37] His success spawned other mills across New England, but they remained small in structure and output compared to the mills that would later be established.[38]

By 1800, Slater's Mill employed more than 100 workers. A decade later 61 cotton mills turning more than 31,000 spindles were operating in the United States, with Rhode Island and the Philadelphia region the main manufacturing centers. The textile industry was established, although factory operations were still limited to carding and spinning.[39]

In the early years of the nineteenth century, American merchants suffered severe losses at sea. Europe was embroiled in the Napoleonic Wars and American ships were caught in the crossfire, often resulting in the loss of cargo. Shipping had become a risky business.[40] To protect Americans at sea and keep the country out of the European conflict, President Jefferson instituted an embargo in 1807. One of the results of this action was that, with British textiles now unavailable, the price of textiles in the United States skyrocketed.[41] The War of 1812 had further negative impact on shipping and commerce. The British Royal Navy blockaded ports, prohibiting exporting as well as importing. These economic adversities forced American commercial shippers to begin to look for new enterprises in which to invest their capital.[42]

A group of Boston merchants decided to diversify their investments, believing that too much of their capital was invested in shipping. They felt the need to seek out other commercial avenues.[43] One of them, Francis C. Lowell, visited Britain in 1811 ostensibly for his health. There was, in fact, an ulterior motive for his trip. Lowell toured mills throughout England and Scotland and observed firsthand the impact of industrialization on British society.[44] Lowell made mental notes about the positive and negative impact of industrialization. He was also able to memorize the design of textile technology he observed. Before his return to America British officials searched Lowell's luggage to make certain he was not carrying any documentation from his visits to the mills with him back to the United States. Robert Dalzell writes: "Leaving the British officials who twice searched his luggage none the wiser, he managed by meticulous observation to memorize the principal features of the power loom well enough to produce his own version of it on his return to Boston."[45]

Also occurring at this time was a transformation in the modes and means of transportation in the United States. Difficulties moving men and material during the War of

1812 prompted entrepreneurs to seek out new and better modes of transportation. Shortly after the war, rapid development in internal improvements, including development of roads, canals, ferry systems, and bridges, made it easier to speed and lower the cost of the movement of goods.[46] The invention of the steamboat plus the imminent completion of the first major railroad facilitated this increased ease in the movement of manufactured goods.[47] The transportation revolution broke down barriers of distance and isolation, uprooting established communities and existing markets and created new and potentially larger markets.[48] As the migration of people westward continued domestic commerce became more valuable than foreign commerce and a new continental marketplace was created.[49] At the same time, use of the new source of power, steam, meant that technologies of mass production were being developed and implemented.[50] Facilitated by Eli Whitney's concept of interchangeable machinery parts, manufacturing on a mass scale began to be established in America.[51]

Upon his return to the United States, Francis Lowell, together with his partners Patrick Tracy Jackson and Nathan Appleton, built the first modern factory in the country at Waltham, Massachusetts. Their goal was to establish a new industrial process were all aspects of the endeavor were operated as one entity. Unlike the Slater Mill, this factory went beyond the carding-and-spinning process to incorporate weaving as well. One enterprise recruited the labor, raised the necessary capital, purchased supplies, and marketed the finished goods. Combining their enterprise with the new modes of transportation, these developers could get their product to consumers in a timely and economical manner. This combination of all aspects of the manufacturing process was unprecedented.[52]

The first enterprise at Waltham was formulated as a company called the Boston Manufacturing Company. The endeavor met with stunning success and in a matter of just a few

years, the Company looked to expand.[53] Some twenty miles northwest of Boston the Merrimack River ran in a series of waterfalls near a location known as East Chelmsford. The Boston Associates, as the group of developers came to be known, undertook the project much like modern-day mall developers: they developed a concept for a planned industrial city; bought and developed the land (in their case, building locks and canals to harness the water source and provide modes of transportation); and then leased the land and water rights to various companies (in much the same way the mall developer leases square footage to individual merchants).[54]

By 1820 over one-quarter of the workforce in New England and the Mid-Atlantic States had changed from agricultural work to working in small factories.[55] With the development of the Lowell model, those small factories developed into large ones. In 1822 the Boston Associates had articles of association drawn up and created a new organization called the Merrimack Manufacturing Company. By September 1823 the wheel of the Merrimack Company's first cotton mill began to turn.[56] In 1824 a manufacturing community at the site was incorporated as the town of Lowell, named in honor of the man who had conceived the concept but had not lived to see it to fruition.[57]

The importance of the incorporation of all aspects of the production into one location to the success of the mill system cannot be understated. In addition to incorporating the carding and spinning processes designed by Slater with the power loom design Lowell had pirated from England, other important technological manufacturing developments were incorporated in these institutions as well. Copper cylinder printing, invented in 1783 by Scotsman Thomas Bell, allowed for intricate and delicate engravings on the copper cylinder that resulted in finer prints and the possibility of multiple inkings.[58] Employing new technologies into the mills meant that raw bales of cotton were converted into completed printed product at one location, cutting the

time and expense involved in transporting the cotton to different locations for different stages of the manufacturing process. This incorporation of the various aspects of textile production significantly impacted the overall growth and success of the textile industry throughout the United States. These technological advancements not only resulted in decreased costs to the manufacturer, they made printed fabric available to consumers in greater quantities and at lower prices.[59]

The impact of these advances can be dramatically demonstrated by the following: before the copper cylinders were developed, a four-color print using wood block printing required fifteen hours to complete. Printing the same design with the cylinder printing system could be accomplished in ninety seconds. The result of this rapid production was that what had cost twenty-two cents per yard in the early part of the nineteenth century dropped to ten cents per yard by mid-century.[60] One can extrapolate from this example how mechanization of the other stages of the production process greatly decreased the length of time necessary to finish a product, thus cutting costs and increasing product availability along with profits.

The technological advances in textile production also spurred chemical experimentation to enhance dyes. The achievement of permanent color was a major breakthrough.[61] Water-fast India brown ink was another technological triumph of this era. As we will see in the subsequent chapter on the Baltimore album quilts, India ink was used exuberantly for sketches, inscriptions, and detailed embellishments (including thorns on stems, veins on leaves, and stamens in flowers). Ink is the predominant form of embellishment on the classic Baltimore album quilts.[62]

Numerous companies established mills at Lowell. The incorporation of the Hamilton Manufacturing Company in 1825, Appleton and Lowell in 1828, and the Suffolk and Tremont companies in 1830 followed Merrimack Manufacturing. But mills were not the only

establishments in Lowell. The Kinset Machine Shop, which today houses the American Textile History Museum, provided parts to keep the machinery running. Churches were built to tend the spiritual needs of the workers. Supply stores made certain the residents of Lowell had access to goods. Everything was owned, operated, or leased by companies owned by the Boston Associates.

The impact of the Lowell mill manufacturing endeavors on the nation was extensive. The integration in the Lowell mills of a complete manufacturing process provided the model of automation and assembly-line production that would characterize American industry throughout the next century and beyond.[63] In addition, American manufacturing altered American expectations. As the material surroundings of the average American became more diversified it impacted how Americans thought of things, and transformed how Americans viewed themselves and their role in the world throughout the first half of the nineteenth century.[64] Some historians have even argued that these changes in American self-perception provided the basis for that period of the nineteenth century known as the "era of reform."[65]

As previously noted, one of the things that the War of 1812 clearly demonstrated was that the nation needed a better system of internal improvements. The result was a boom in turnpike construction. By 1825 roads crisscrossed New England and the Mid-Atlantic States. A national road was constructed from Cumberland, Maryland, to Vandalia, Illinois, and the invention of the steamboat made rivers navigable upstream and precipitated the building of canals. In 1828 the Baltimore and Ohio railroad became the first major chartered railroad in the country. By the late 1840s there were nearly 9,000 miles of railroad track crisscrossing the nation. In the next ten years 22,000 more would be laid.[66] Improved transportation stimulated and united the national economy and stimulated immigration to fill the demand for labor.[67]

The impact of the changes in transportation and the establishment of industry on American society were dramatic. Until this time, most people lived in the same type of houses, used the same kinds of furniture, employed the same type of implements and wore the same style of clothes.[68] The material surroundings of the average American became diversified in ways undreamed of before. Americans were learning to live in a constantly changing environment with the knowledge that virtually anything could be changed or improved upon.[69]

Home innovations during this period included the steam radiator, the ice-making machine, paper window shades, new stoves and lamps, and thousands of other new household gadgets.[70] All of these things helped to make the running of the home an easier process and, as will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, changed the role of women.

The economic development of the city of Baltimore was a reflection of the changing times. Although the next chapter will discuss in more detail the development of the city, it is appropriate here to examine the establishment of Baltimore's industrial and commercial industries. During the early nineteenth century, commerce focused on the excitement precipitated by the opportunities presented by westward expansion.[71] The establishment of railroads to accommodate this trade reinforced Baltimore's prosperity and growth. The ability to unite different sections of the country through improved transportation and technology, making them interdependent, enhanced not only the national economy but also the role of Baltimore in the nation.[72] Industrialization and the changes it precipitated meant that the tempo of life increased. Steam power signaled a major shift in Baltimore's social economy because merchants (being the only group who could afford to do so) embraced it, introduced it into factory situations, focused upon textile manufacturing, and produced exclusively for the home market.[73]

The rise of industrialization in Baltimore, beginning in 1807, was a result of the city's progressive involvement in the European wars. Industrialization, patriotism, privateering, and profits were all interrelated in forming nineteenth-century norms.[74] The textile industry was perfectly suited to the Baltimore area and its physical location sheltered from open sea and fed by scores of rivers. The Chesapeake Bay presented Baltimore with a sizable and varied market in an essentially enclosed area.[75] The wartime crisis from 1807 to 1815 was crucial to the appearance of industrialization, as it married civic concern with natural patriotism and intensified Baltimore's identification with the nation.[76] Patriotism now joined with profit to sanction social and technological innovations. Indeed, they became the reason for the very existence of innovation.[77]

The Warren Manufacturing Company opened operations in July of 1824 and the Rockland Print Works followed in 1829-1830. By 1831 the Rockland Print Works produced 8,000 yards of fabric per day.[78] The significant impact of industrialization on the region was the shift of market orientation from foreign to domestic.[79] In the decade between 1830 and1840 the number of American factories rose from 795 to 1,240, and manufactured value almost doubled. Baltimore shared, and in some cases, led in this growth.[80]

By the time of the beginning of the War of 1812, Baltimore already had a complex development of urban institutions that organized community life in various ways.[81] Private individuals and companies provided municipal services such as fire protection, water facilities, and new street construction. Baltimoreans believed private profit and public service were synonymous.[82] Baltimore's middle class did not merely acquire political power when the city incorporated; they used their new power to promote their own stability and continuity of power.[83] Families in Baltimore society comprised the most important social unit. Families

played fundamental roles in various economic, political, and social activities.[84] The role of women within this structure and how their role was reflected in their quilts will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Although the strategic location of Baltimore naturally made it subject to tensions between those promoting industry and those supporting an agrarian America, Baltimore had an important role in the communication system of the new nation pushing its frontier inland. The city functioned as one of several dozen new pressure points in world trade.[85] Baltimore went through a cycle of prosperity, recession, building, and development of its opportunities in capitalizing on western trade throughout the first few decades of the nineteenth century.[86] This cycle rose to a euphoric peak in 1852, and then declined into anxiety and ambivalence as the city and the nation faced severe problems in 1857.[87] The rapid and successful development of business in Baltimore before 1857 enabled Baltimoreans to exploit opportunities, but also made society less flexible in responding to change.[88]

The urbanization of Baltimore changed not only the face of the city itself but its cultural ways as well. Factors that contributed to these changes were a transformation of labor resulting from the emergence of manufacturing as an alternative to agriculture or trade, the feeling of the isolation of social groups as immigrants poured into the area, and changes resulting from the popularity of Jacksonian Democracy.[89] People worried about the failure to preserve the pre-industrial village-like character of Baltimore in the post-industrial age. Baltimore's continuing metropolitan expansion and growth created unease and uncertainty and a resurgence of cultural conservatism.[90]

The population grew dramatically during the first half of the nineteenth century, creating a new social order in the city between 1843 and 1861.[91] While the physical look of the city

changed to accommodate the location of industries close to sources of power or modes of transportation, retail goods and services were scattered throughout the city.[92] New housing had to be provided to shelter the growing labor force and twelve new social institutions were created between 1840 and 1850 to accommodate orphans, the sick and poor, alcoholics, etc. There was also an increase in the number of new church congregations (eighty-one in fifteen years) and a shift in the impact of public schooling.[93]

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Baltimore was a prime example of the impact of industrialization as the city evolved into a truly urban American community.

IV.

Nationalism Exemplified: The Rise of Nineteenth-Century Baltimore

While a sense of national consciousness existed in America before the first battle of the American Revolution, a national American identity was still developing even as the War for Independence commenced. Throughout the fledgling years of the new country, the concept of nationhood and the development of a definition of what it meant to be an American was an on-going process. As historian Alfred F. Young noted, the Revolution politicized many groups of people, helping them to acquire a heightened consciousness of themselves and their distinct interests that enabled them to become a presence in American life.[94] By 1800, Americans had nearly 200 years of experience upon which to draw and a glorious recent past upon which to pin their pride. Nationalism—that sense of national consciousness that places emphasis on the promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or groups[95]—was taking root. American nationalism grew out of the history of the struggle for independence and the struggle to make the country a success. Patriotism, the outward manifestation of nationalism, flourished in the early nineteenth century.[96]

Gordon Wood, in his examination of the radical effects of the American Revolution, identifies the Revolution itself as the key to the bonds of union that established the new country. Wood maintains that the United States was already composed of diverse peoples who did not share any tribal or national identity. To be an American was not a matter of blood. It was a common belief and behavior, and the source of that common belief and behavior was the

American Revolution. “The Revolution, and only the Revolution,” Wood asserts, “made them one people.”[97]

The Revolution transformed the population from subjects to citizens. Such a transformation occurs when the individual realizes that as a citizen he/she is a part of a group of people in possession of their own sovereignty. Involved in this evolution is a change in the level of participation the individual practices within society, not only politically, but in the social and economic sense as well.[98] The excitement and zeal that seem a natural recourse of this shift in self-perception explains what Wood calls “the scrambling, individualistic, acquisitive society that suddenly emerged in the early nineteenth century.”[99] Americans were celebrating their new status but relied upon long-standing concepts of the benefits of hard work to ensure their success. This attitude came to be recognized as the “American work ethic.” All of the members of society were encouraged to work; if they did not there was something wrong with them.[100] The Puritan work ethic of the early New England colonists had held that the success of the “American experiment” was evidence that the Almighty approved of the undertaking and, as the anthem would later proclaim, “shed His grace on thee.” This historical perspective in the evaluation of America’s economic development during the early national period at the beginning of the nineteenth century explains the underpinnings of national pride that ordinary Americans held as the country pursued commercial and economic success.

If, as Wood claims, the Revolution was the glue that held Americans together as a nation, the meaning of the Revolution differed for the different groups of people within the country. For some, it meant the eventual establishment of a formal Constitution and the structure of the federal government while for others it meant the freedom to be left alone to pursue happiness and the ability to secure financial success.[101] Some saw a strong American economy as the major

source for a cohesive national society. For those individuals, ensuring economic success was the appropriate expression of patriotism.[102]

Americans found many outlets for expression of their national pride and patriotism with some displays more subtle than others. Americans viewed with pride the successful commercial ventures that played a vital role in helping the new country to thrive. As noted in the previous chapter, by the end of the eighteenth century the United States had become a major international trader, with ships calling in every major port in the world. Just before the turn of the century, American merchants were trading millions of dollars worth of molasses, rum, sugar, and other products from Spanish and French colonies, marking them as American exports in the hopes of guarding the ships from becoming entangled in the ongoing European Wars.[103]

The tremendous rate of growth experienced in the early nineteenth century, both in terms of land acquisition and rapid increases in population were another source of national pride. The success of the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804-06 confirmed a continental vision of the United States. [104] By the 1840s the landmass of the country more than doubled what it had been at the turn of the century. [105] Between the Revolution and 1800 the population of the United States increased from 2.5 to 5.3 million people and by mid-century increased more than 400 percent from what it had been in 1800.[106] This rapid expansion signaled a period of great change and development. While many citizens welcomed those changes, for others the speed with which they were occurring was unsettling, as will be discussed later in the chapter on the changing role of women during this time period.

The influx of immigrants had a strong impact on the country, as varying cultures came together to participate in the expansion of America. American folk art of the period shows that artists were drawing upon many traditions, including those immigrants brought with them. The

Pennsylvania Germans (called Pennsylvania Dutch, a derivative of Deutsch) maintained their language, customs, and artistic traditions and had a large impact on items produced in Maryland, where many of the groups settled prior to moving into Pennsylvania. The later chapter on the Baltimore album quilts will further explore the impact of the art of this immigrant community.

Along with this influx of immigrants, a distinct American culture, or "American voice," began to take shape in the early national period. This voice included a cultural identity that was strongly connected to nature and to a sense of divine mission and had liberating effects on perceptions about the country, both by Americans themselves and by others.[107] Nineteenth-century American writers and artists contributed to the formation of the American voice. While some Americans despaired that the country lacked a long history of culture to rival Europe or the ancient Greeks, others encouraged their fellow countrymen to celebrate America in all its glory. Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his famous "Essay on Self Reliance," challenged Americans to stop imitating European styles and develop their own American way of doing things.[108] Both Emerson and Henry David Thoreau proposed in their writings that the American character was deeply individualistic and connected to natural and spiritual sources rather than to the long-established conventions of social life. Other notable American literary figures of the nineteenth century such as Emily Dickinson, Herman Melville, Mark Twain, and Walt Whitman "spoke in a distinctly American voice about people's relation to one another, and described American freedom, diversity, and equality with fervor."[109]

In the artwork of the period, the abundance and variety of American natural resources was celebrated in place of things such as ancient architecture and ruins. This glorification of the abundance of nature found on the American continent was the identifying characteristic of a style of art known as "the Hudson River School."[110] The grand vistas of the American landscapes

produced by these artists reflected the American expansion of the period and vividly captured the unique American cultural identity with its emphasis on the natural environment.[111] Any humans portrayed in these paintings were small and inconsequential when compared with the magnitude of their surroundings. This doctrine of natural theology held that to understand nature was to gain an understanding of God. Both Emerson and Thoreau wrote that nature held spiritual significance. Being in tune with nature was a means of individual fulfillment and of being symbolically united with God.[112] The sentiment celebrating the grandeur of nature was shared by many artists of this period, including the Baltimore album quilters, whose incorporation of designs celebrating nature as a way of suggesting that the quilter and her family were morally and spiritually enlightened. The subsequent chapter on the Baltimore album quilts will examine more closely how these quilters were highly influenced by the same artistic influences as the painters of the Hudson River School.

The sense of expansiveness evidenced through prevailing art forms was also evidenced in the displays of patriotism of the era. Holidays, including Washington's birthday and the Fourth of July were devoted to great exhibitions of oratory, parades, and “patriotic enthusiasms.”[113] George Washington was highly celebrated, and biographies of Washington, as well as other prominent American war heroes, were immensely popular.[114]

Emblems of nationhood and patriotism appeared everywhere, including monuments and statues. The symbol of the eagle experienced immense popularity and was found in every form of artwork from drawings and paintings to silver pieces and ornamentation on public buildings. The image of Uncle Sam became popular during the War of 1812. “The Star Spangled Banner” was adopted in 1831 as the national anthem and the symbol of the flag appeared over buildings, in publications, on clothing, and in artwork. Variations of the flag included red, white, and blue

bunting, swags, and chevrons. All of these motifs found their way into the Baltimore album quilts.

To examine how Baltimore reflected the surging patriotic sentiment of the early nineteenth century, one must look again at the development of the city. Never a significant center of trade, enterprise, government, or culture during the colonial period, Baltimore was a mere village of twenty-five houses in 1752. At the outset of the Revolution it was a small town with a population of about 6,000. Baltimore's early growth was directly connected to the sudden growth that accompanied independence.[115] By 1800, the town had grown so quickly that Baltimore was the third largest city in America (behind New York and Philadelphia) and its population blossomed to 30,000 inhabitants. It played an important role in the communication system of the nation.[116] Baltimore was the second leading seaport in the country, securing its position in the early nineteenth century as a center for world trade. The physical location of the city made it an ideal spot for the development of marketing resources.[117]

Early patterns of immigration and economic development set Baltimore off from the older more developed parts of Maryland. Southern Maryland and the eastern shore were dominated by landed gentry with a tobacco-based economy and slave labor, but Baltimore's early economy focused on wheat-producing grain mills and ironworks.[118] Baltimore's location on the Chesapeake Bay was an ideal spot for various types of mills. Maryland had a mostly agrarian society while Baltimore focused on a mercantile-based economy.[119] Urban commercial Baltimore was a very different society from that of the rural and agricultural communities of the rest of the state that surrounded it.[120] This distinction between Baltimore and the rest of the state would be a strong factor in the unease prevalent in the city at mid-century (to be discussed in further detail in chapter seven).

As previously noted, the Revolutionary War and the establishment of independence were catalysts for growth for Baltimore.[121] Rapid and successful development of business in Baltimore at the turn of the nineteenth century led Baltimoreans to exploit opportunities, but also made society less flexible in responding to change.[122]

As discussed in the previous chapter, industrialization came to Baltimore in 1807. Steam power signaled a major shift in the local economy and the merchants of the city embraced it, introduced it into factory situations and built their railroads to tap its power. Their factories focused on textile manufacturing and produced items exclusively for the home market.[123] The three major factories built in and around Baltimore between 1807 and 1815 were Union Manufacturing, Washington Cotton Manufacturing Company, and Powhatan Cotton Mills. In 1810 the Athenian Society of Baltimore was formed for marketing the new domestic textiles.[124] The success of Baltimore's new textile industry can be measured through increases in sales by the Athenian Society: $17,608 in 1809 compared with $80,893 in 1812.[125]

According to economic historian Gary Lawson Browne: "The wartime crisis from 1807 to 1815 was crucial to the appearance of industrialization, as it married civic concern with natural patriotism and intensified Baltimore's identification with the nation."[126] It was considered patriotic to support technological innovations that helped the fledging industries to be profitable.

Baltimore's reputation as a symbol of heroic patriotism and triumph was solidified during the War of 1812. When the British attacked Baltimore the city of Washington had already succumbed and Baltimore was left to defend itself. Everyone in the city shared the defense of the community and Baltimore was the only American community to successfully resist British bombardment. Out of the bombing and battles of September 12 and 13, 1814, "The Star

Spangled Banner" emerged to symbolize the community's and eventually the nation's triumph.[127]

Following the war, Baltimore continued its metropolitan expansion and the growth of its domestic economy. The development of transportation routes, including regular steamboat service on the Chesapeake Bay, sped up and stabilized transportation systems.[128]

The immigrant population continued to grow and during the second decade of the nineteenth century 10,500 immigrants entered the United States through the port of Baltimore. That number rose to 55,000 during the next ten years. The impact of the large number of these new arrivals who stayed in the Baltimore area and did not move west contributed to the creation of changes in the social and cultural order in the city between 1843 and 1861.[129] The result was that the economic, social, and political norms that had been generated and gathering force during the previous three generations merged as a nineteenth-century society.[130] At the same time, Baltimore's physical environment and economy changed dramatically and the city blossomed into an interregional economy. Industrialization and changes in transportation had assumed a new, more vital importance, opening up new markets and expanding old ones, including opening the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys. There was also a tremendous increase in the demand for American cotton, both from manufacturers at home and abroad.[131] By the mid-nineteenth century, Baltimore was the proto-type of an American city facing fast-paced changes on many fronts.

V.

Nineteenth-Century American Women:
From "Republican Motherhood" to "The Cult of Domesticity"

Although it was not uncommon to find men involved in quilting prior to the mid-twentieth century, women have been the primary participants for the entirety of the history of quilting in America. The Baltimore album quilts were made exclusively by women and are emblematic of the role of these ladies in the American culture of the time. This chapter and the subsequent examination of the Baltimore album quilts themselves will examine the combination of factors that resulted in this unique style.

During the American colonial period most women were too busy with tasks necessary for basic survival to spend time making quilts for bed coverings when other less expensive alternatives were available. The effort required to run a household and keep a family fed and clothed prohibited the vast majority of colonial women from spending their valuable time doing something as labor-intensive as quilting. The folklore that depicts colonists fulfilling their needs for warm bedding by piecing together available scrap of fabric has almost obscured historic reality. Then as now the women who made quilts did so as a means of expressing their artistic and creative impulses.[132]

The American Revolution not only created an atmosphere where men re-created the structure of their government, it also prompted discussions about the role of women in the new nation. While the rights of men had been hotly debated for much of the last half of the eighteenth century, women's rights were still a delicate and sensitive issue. According to

historian Rosemarie Zagarri, in the post-Revolutionary era, Americans attempted to reconcile two conflicting principles: the equality of the sexes and the subordination of women to men. Zagarri states that the rights of women were defined in contrast to the rights of men. Specifically, she notes that one theory of natural rights held that rights emphasized equality, individual autonomy, and the expansion of personal freedoms. The other emphasized rights as benefits conferred by God and expressed in performance of duties to society. It was this second theory of rights that the post-Revolutionary American society applied to women. According to Richard D. Brown: "The stress on duty and obligation, rather than on liberty and choice, gave women's rights a fundamentally different character from those of men. Women's rights were to be nonpolitical in nature, confined to the traditional feminine role of wife and mother."[133]

Women, explains historian Linda Kerber, were encouraged to confine their participation in the Republic within the realm of their home and family life. As women were confined to their domestic role, they became guardians of public virtue. An ideology of citizenship that merged the domestic domain of the pre-industrial woman with the new public ideology of individual, responsibility and civic virtue evolved into a concept that Kerber termed "Republican Motherhood." [134]

Not all women calmly accepted their roles as Republican Mothers. Women writers employed satire as a forum throughout the years of the early Republic to express their desire to play a more public role in society. The guise of satire made criticism less threatening.[135] Both major political parties that emerged in the post-Revolutionary era carefully avoided taking any position on a public role for women, as public support for such a role usually invited hostility and ridicule.[136]

As a consensus developed around the ideology of Republican Motherhood the premise held that a mother, committed to the service of her family and to the state, might serve a political purpose. Those who opposed women in politics could accept the concept that women could—and should—play a political role through the raising of a patriotic child. The Republican Mother was to encourage her sons in their civic interest and participation. She was to educate her children and guide them in the paths of morality and virtue. But she was not to tell her male relatives for whom to vote. She was a citizen but not a constituent.[137] The result of the development of the concept of Republican Motherhood meant that the female domestic world was isolated from politics while it justified women's absorption and participation into the civic culture by providing a specified but restricted role.[138]

The Enlightenment had succeeded in broadening the role of males within society but had not extended to women. The ideology of the Republican Mother had the appearance of broadening women's roles. Those who shared the vision of the Republican Mother usually insisted upon better education, clearer recognition of women's economic contributions, and a strong political identification with the Republic. The idea could be pulled in both conservative and reform directions. As Kerber wrote: "This ideology was strong enough to…redefine female political behavior as valuable rather than abnormal, as a source of strength to the Republic rather than an embarrassment."[139] The theory emphasized the importance of family structure within society because it recognizes that political socialization takes place at an early age. Since the mother is the first teacher of the child, and because the family is a basic part of the system of political communication, logic follows that patterns of family authority influence the general political culture.[140] Thus the mother's role is critical to the process.

The establishment of industry in the United States greatly affected the role of women in society. Prior to the industrial revolution, women often held jobs outside of the home. With the advent of industrialization only women of lower classes worked in factories or in service jobs. Society was defining for middle-class women a life of domesticity. The development of commerce and urbanization created a modern world where workplaces were physically removed from the home. Men left the home to go out to work and women stayed and maintained the home environment. This separation reinforced societal ideals of domesticity.[141] Between 1830 and 1865, this gendered pattern of economic activity established the condition in which separate spheres for women and men became clearly defined, especially for urban white middle-class women. The industrial revolution separated home and work place, making it more difficult for women to blend economic productivity with domestic responsibilities. Industrialization meant that the only professions open to upper- and middle-class women were those of teacher, missionary, and writer. The home, the sphere of woman, became a separate entity from income-earning work.[142] By mid-century, affluent married women had resolved the difficulties of homemaking and income production in favor of domesticity, while poorer women combined the two through part-time labor and homework.[143] This new phenomenon is known as "the cult of domesticity."

By 1830, the United States was a nation in transition, evolving into an urban, industrial society at a rapid and uneven pace. Perhaps as a reaction to the speed and magnitude of the changes taking place, nostalgia and a desire to preserve what were considered traditional ways were pervasive. The changing times ushered in a social as well as an economic revolution for American women. Magazines flourished throughout the country in the years before the Civil War, driven by lower manufacturing costs and improved distribution methods. Many of these

periodicals addressed topics they deemed important to nineteenth-century American women: domestic economy, motherhood, health, appropriate recreation, morality and religion, reform, indeed most subjects imaginable. The notable exception was politics. The style and substance of these publications varied dramatically according to the interests of their editors.[144] Over one hundred magazines, specifically addressed to the quandaries and delights of "ladies," blossomed during this time. None was more successful than Sarah Josepha Hale's *Godey's Ladies Book*.[145]

Godey's Ladies Book became the modern woman's manual and contributed mightily to the creation of the "cult of domesticity," defining the home as woman's domain. The magazine adopted a deliberate philosophy to channel women's contributions into "the proper course."[146] The nineteenth-century woman was charged with the moral, spiritual, and physical well being of her entire family. Historian Catherine Clinton asserts that women perceived that they might extend female jurisdiction into the public and hitherto exclusively male realm by using their "domestic" role as a lever—wedging themselves into positions of power, however limited, through exploitation of their domesticity. [147] Others historians dispute Clinton's perspective. It is interesting to note that many women entered professions outside of the home at this time as they were members of the legions of domesticity professionals (writers, educators, and lecturers) who dispensed advice on everything necessary to be a "true woman."[148]

The refinement of the middle class profoundly affected females: the model woman portrayed in these publications was a cultural myth, bearing little resemblance to any woman's daily experience. Most women were judged by unattainable standards and thousands of women

were socialized to this ideal through the widespread dissemination of the periodical literature of the era.

Adding to the pervasive sentimentalism of this era were factors reflecting the impact of the passage of time. The generation of the Founding Fathers was beginning to pass and the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence prompted as much wistful nostalgia as it did patriotic pontification. America's glorious past was extolled and celebrated with fervor.

Urbanization, industrialization, migration, and immigration accentuated the diversity of American society.[149] Constant western movement meant family structure was being altered as members left to explore and settle new territories, many times never to be seen by their loved ones again. As the nation expanded westward, even families and friends who were still together began to view their personal relationships with a kind of nostalgic sentiment. Women collected autographs and kept them in elaborately decorated books called "albums." Mementos of events were highly prized and cherished. The mid-nineteenth century was a time of unprecedented change in science and industry, in social and economic affairs, in ethical and religious thought. Understandably, it was a time of mixed emotions. People prepared for the future, with all of its promises ahead, but also clung to the past and its security. The present seemed more and more to be a passing phase. There was an abiding sense that life would never be the same again.[150]

In this time of change, quilts moved from being merely useful household items to being sentiments of commemoration of major events. Special quilts were created for weddings, family quilts traced lineage, scripture quilts reflected renewed religious fervor, and friendship quilts were given to those moving far away. There were even deathwatch quilts. In the early days of portrait photography and high infant mortality, often the only photo that might exist of a deceased child included a favorite cherished quilt.[151]

As previously noted, industrialization caused women's economic functions to be altered and their role in the family changed. Instead of participating in the physical production of food and cloth as their colonial ancestors had done, women became consumers of goods and services. As middle-class married white women in particular came to be associated with consumption, family care, and the private world of the home, men moved outside the household to take waged employment. Accentuated female responsibility for home and family and male obligations for economic support changed the family dynamic. Domesticity and the separation of spheres turned the household into a haven from the increasing disorder of the urban, industrial world, and the cult of domesticity sought to keep women within the home in order to protect them from the chaos and impurity of public life.[152]

The growing prosperity of some urban dwellers and an increased supply of immigrant women servants to perform household chores freed some married women from domestic production. As the middle class prospered, these women redefined their social roles in accord with their altered economic functions, intensifying the emotional and nurturing aspects of family life over the production of goods. Affluence and the impact of cultural advisers found in the periodical publications placed value precisely on those functions that remained after manufacturing moved outside the home—child rearing and home maintenance. The heightened emphasis on domesticity invested women's daily tasks with a sacred dignity and importance. In accepting their domestic roles, women increasingly sought to protect their homes and families by attacking the problems that they perceived as threatening to their domain: intemperance, immortality, poverty, and slavery.[153] The irony is that the efforts they undertook in combating societal ills eventually would be the very thing that would draw these women out of their spheres of influence and into the civic realm. During the years from 1830 to 1860, a host of reformers in

a variety of reform movements examined and attacked every conceivable sin, private and public.[154] Some historians claim that the reform era in the pre-Civil War United States was so great that to understand its import is to understand much about the development of the nation as a whole.[155] While reformers saw the promise of Jacksonian Democracy, the challenge of westward expansion, and the issue of slavery as key to reshaping the future of the country, others saw reform itself as a threat to the social order. For some, the response to reformers was the attempt to preserve and extend prevailing ideas and modes of operation. Reform was a threat to the social order.[156] Eventually women became leaders in the forefront of many of these reform movements, a seeming anomaly given their societal confinement within their domestic sphere of influence.

The Baltimore album quilters of the mid-nineteenth century were clearly influenced by both the concept of Republican Motherhood and the "cult of domesticity." The family was the most important social unit and families played fundamental roles in various economic, political, and social activities of the Baltimore area.[157] The involvement of these quilters in various religious, social, and civic organizations is reflected in their needlework. With Baltimore's commercial successes, the lives of middle- and upper-class women reflected the culture of their society.

Although female craftwork received little public recognition in antebellum America, nevertheless it was an important part of women's social and domestic culture, treasured by families who handed quilts and samplers down the generations.[158] Women reconciled their artistic endeavors with motherhood through domestic crafts, especially quilting. Women cultivated gardens to demonstrate their homemaking skills and to assimilate the doctrine of natural theology, incorporating nineteenth-century aesthetic sensibilities and motifs into all

aspects of their creative work. Incorporated into their quilts were a wide range of designs and patterns, including floral motifs. Some historians define quilting as a metaphor for a female aesthetic, for sisterhood, and the politics of feminist survival. Each woman pieced her own quilt individually. Then a group sewed the completed quilt top to its backing fabric.[159]

The themes, motifs, and styles were reflective of the era. Botany was one of the few acceptable sciences for feminine study and its influence is seen clearly in quilts of the nineteenth century.[160] Although the role of women was clearly defined within the "cult of domesticity," the Baltimore album quilts demonstrate that women were active in expressing thoughts, concepts, and civic and patriotic beliefs that extended beyond their proscribed sphere of influence.

In her extensive study of the Baltimore album quilts, Jennifer Goldsborough discusses the impact of the culture of the city on the quilters. As noted in a previous chapter, during the early decades of the nineteenth century, Baltimore experienced a surge of growth and prosperity far greater than any other city in North America. For a time, it was the third largest city in the United States and its port status provided it with the reputation for being highly sophisticated and fashion-conscious. Goldsborough notes: "There was a distinct local taste for elaboration in all things, from fashion to home décor. Encrusted silver pieces, called repoussé, were extremely coveted and popular and many of the shapes found on these silver objects (tea pots, urns, etc.) can be found replicated in the designs in the Baltimore album quilts."[161] The local taste was, as Goldsborough terms it, over-blown ornamentation.

Painted and gilded furniture was collected by all who could afford it. Upholstery fabrics were rich in both texture and detail. In fact, fabric of all kinds and variety were more available to the women of Baltimore at reasonable prices than anywhere else in the United States at that particular time.[162]

During the Baltimore album quilt craze, Maryland women were still responsible for sewing all bedding, towels, table linen, children's clothing, husband's clothing, their own clothing, and that of any servants or slaves. Although mid-nineteenth-century Baltimore was a center for early manufactured clothing, it was not widely used until after the Baltimore album quilt period ended (post-1858). Therefore, it is likely that the ladies who made the Baltimore album quilts had sewing help for routine chores so they could devote time to fine handiwork.[163]

As mentioned previously, Baltimore album quilts do not fit the myth of American quilts, which is that they were examples of American ingenuity and frugality as early settlers and pioneers used every scrap of fabric available to them. The Baltimore album quilts were comprised of fabrics bought at considerable expense for the specific purpose of being used in a quilt. This meant that the women who made them had the resources to obtain the finest materials. They must also have had considerable time available to them to create these elaborate works as the surviving Baltimore album quilts attest to the thousands of hours of work these creations required.[164] It is appropriate to conclude, therefore, that these quilt makers had both the economic status and the luxury of time required to complete quilts of this magnitude. In addition, the glory of the quilts testify to the pride these women obviously had in being in a social and economic climate that provided them with the resources necessary to complete these masterpieces.

In addition to employing designs found in home furnishings, silver and elaborate fabrics and wall coverings, Baltimore album quilt designers drew heavily upon other available designs of the day. For example, in Goldsborough's research she found a catalogue of printer's ready-made type that shows almost every design to be found in the Baltimore album quilts, including various organizational and patriotic insignia not readily found elsewhere.[165] Baltimore album

quilters also used pictures of everything from the U.S. Capitol Building, a Mexican War soldier with a flag, and up-to-the minute machinery such as steamboats, sailing ships, trains, and fire-fighting equipment for motifs in their quilts. The machinery depicted represented the latest inventions. A picture of a horse and rider used in several Baltimore album quilts has been traced to an 1848 Philadelphia published book called *Pictorial History of Mexico and the Mexican War*.[166] The implication of the inclusion of these design motifs in their quilts is that these women were well educated, well read, and socially aware. The buildings and monuments depicted were the newest and most important. Even inscriptions included on the quilts—the hymns, poems and sentiments—were the most current in common usage. Also widely used were representations of the newest in botanical decorations for the home—exotic houseplants, including the recently introduced cacti.[167] As part of the fulfillment of their domestic duties women carefully studied botany, often imbuing plants and flowers with great symbolism in their quilts.

The irony of the inclusion of the patriotic, political, and cultural designs employed in the Baltimore album quilts is that they reveal that the women of Baltimore were not the shy, retiring females obsessed with children, kitchen, and church that was the definition of the cult of domesticity. These were aware citizens, despite their lack of civil rights.[168] The Baltimore album quilt makers included subtle and direct commentary on political themes and major world events in their creations. They used their needlework to make their views known. The next chapter will discuss these themes in detail.

The Baltimore album quilts were seldom the work of a single individual. Quilting was often a communal activity. Women gathered in sewing circles not only to assist with one another's quilting, but also to exchange news, recipes, points of view, to share family and

personal concerns, to discuss political issues and to teach basic sewing skills to their daughters in a mutually supportive way.[169] Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote of nineteenth-century quilting bees:

> At the quilting bee, one might have learned how to bring up babies, how to mend a cracked teapot, how to take out grease from brocade, how to reconcile absolute decrees with free will, how to make five yards of cloth answer the purpose of six, and how to put down the Democratic Party.[170]

This activity was widely accepted as an appropriate activity for women. The quilting bee was a particularly popular American pastime, mainly staffed and attended by women. In the nineteenth century it provided company for those women who were isolated in their households.[171] It is ironic to note that in later years when the women's suffrage movement was forming, feminists often denigrated the physical act of quilting by women in the nineteenth century as an act of subjugation. They overlooked the fact that women's rights advocate Susan B. Anthony delivered her first speech on women's suffrage at a quilting bee.[172]

VI.

The Baltimore Album Quilts

Although American quilts were often named to commemorate events (such as the pattern called Burgoyne Surrounded, which celebrated the first major colonial victory over the British during the American Revolution), the quilts in the nineteenth century more commonly told stories or portrayed events directly on their surface. A common practice during the nineteenth century was to inscribe a finished piece with important information, such as the name and date and location of the quiltmaker(s), thus creating precious heirlooms that were handed down from generation to generation, stored in hope chests or put on proud display, as symbols of the artist's impressive abilities.[173] The sense of changing times prevalent during the period made quilters more conscious of leaving behind information that would document what they had done. Quilts were highly valued items, listed among personal goods in wills. The care and concentration committed to quilts so that they would be beautiful and lasting was reflective of the love and attention bestowed upon the thriving nation in the early nineteenth century. As the appreciation for the crafts and skills of the homemaker grew during this period, it was only natural that quilt makers would eventually take quilting to a much higher stage of development.[174] This chapter will examine the phenomenon of the Baltimore album quilts within the context of the time period, discuss the identifying characteristics of this genre, and highlight how the women who made them expressed their patriotic and political views through their needlework.

An album is a collection, usually in book form, of similar objects, such as musical compositions or photographs.[175] It is an anthology of a collection of selected similar pieces, or passages, of works of art or music. The popularity of the photographic studio in the nineteenth century closely paralleled a prevalent need to somehow preserve each moment. Most homes possessed an album of family portraits.[176] In the mid-nineteenth century, album books of many types were immensely popular. "Young women treasured watercolor sketches, sentimental verses, dried flowers, the autographs of friends and other mementos in pretty books called albums."[177] Great importance was placed upon drawing both as art and as a technical skill and these young women included their drawings in their albums.[178] The development of album quilts was a textile extension of the album book where a collection of different fabric blocks replaced pages and were laid side by side instead of bound between covers.[179]

The catalogue of a recent quilt exhibit based upon a number of floral quilts in the collection of the International Quilt Study Center housed at the University of Nebraska indicates that quilts of this era may have also been influenced by European landscape styles introduced to American gardeners during the nineteenth century. The *gardenesque*, an English landscaping style in which every tree and shrub is meant to stand singly yet work as part of a unified whole, parallels the design of nineteenth-century album quilts. Each block contains a design unto itself, yet when arranged with the others, contributes greatly to the overall design. Constructed like a scrapbook, album quilts were often given as tokens of remembrance to family and friends. Although made from quilt blocks of dissimilar design, they work together to create a unified and harmonious whole.

Baltimore Album quilts were first identified by William Dunton, Jr., M.D., in his book, *Old Quilts*. Self-published in 1946, his book identified the premier examples of quilts of a

certain style that Dr. Dunton named "Baltimore album" quilts. A major exhibition of Baltimore album quilts in 1980-82 and the accompanying catalogue entitled *Baltimore Album Quilts* by Dena S. Katzenberg, Consultant Curator to the Baltimore Museum of Art, brought international attention to this genre of quilts.[180] Katzenberg noted that the Baltimore album quilts emerged as a group that comprised "an exceptional and brilliant artistry."[181] While most quilts of the era were functional quilts (in other words, quilts that were put to use), the function of the Baltimore album quilts was to honor, commemorate, celebrate, and serve as sentimental remembrances.[182]

The modern popularity of Baltimore album quilts owes much to the dedicated research and publications of Elly Sienkiewicz. Sienkiewicz not only provided early scholarship on possible designers of original Baltimore album quilts, but her reproduction blocks have enabled modern quilters to have the opportunity to create new quilts in the Baltimore album tradition. The "language of flowers," which was well-known in Europe for centuries but not widely accepted in the United States until the Baltimore album quilt time period, provided quilt makers a creative way to imbue their quilts with deeper meaning. In her extensive body of work, Sienkiewicz examines various interpretations of the "language of flowers" popular among Victorian women to provide suggestions and insights into the symbolism and underlying meaning of many of the original album block designs.[183]

The pioneering scholarship of Katzenberg and Sienkiewicz and the subsequent publication of their studies contributed to the discovery of more than 300 original examples of this type of appliquéd quilt in the last thirty years. While much of the recent research focuses on the patterns and designs, Jennifer Goldsborough, in her book *Lavish Legacies*, closely examines the quilts to learn more about the women who created them within the context of their times. Goldsborough's work provides a compelling guideline for the analysis of the political and

patriotic imagery found in so many of the Baltimore album quilts that will be the focus of this chapter.

The enduring appeal of Baltimore Album quilts and the need to continue their traditions brought about the founding of a non-profit organization, the Baltimore Appliqué Society (BAS) in 1993. The BAS supports the preservation of quilts, textiles, and related documents in museum and historical society collections, such as the Maryland Historical Society and documentary material at the Baltimore Museum of Art. The support of the BAS includes financial contributions, quilts made for fundraisers, and hands-on conservation work. The Maryland Historical Society houses the largest and most representative collection of Baltimore album quilts and during the summer of 2001 hosted the most comprehensive public exhibition of Baltimore album quilts ever undertaken. All of the quilts discussed in this chapter, with the exception of the "Archer quilt" held in the collection of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, are from the Maryland Historical Society collection and frequent reference will be made to the catalogue of that exhibit.

Although album quilts were made in states throughout the mid-Atlantic region in the nineteenth century, research confirms that production of this particularly elaborate version were primarily undertaken in the urban setting of Baltimore City and its immediate surrounding area. Therefore, the name of the city was adopted as an accessible reference for this particular style.[184] The album quilts found in the other mid-Atlantic states were much simpler in design and execution and were much smaller in size. The larger and more elaborate the quilt, the more likely it was to have been constructed in the immediate area around Baltimore.[185]

Figure 1 shows the quilt known as the "Archer Quilt," a piece in the collection of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. It is a prime example of the Baltimore album quilt style and

includes the major characteristics of the genre that makes them readily identifiable. They are composed of individual cloth squares, usually uniform in size and arranged in a grid pattern. Occasionally a quilt will feature a grouping of squares around a larger square in the middle that resembles earlier whole-cloth medallion quilts, thus paying tribute to quilt styles of previous eras. Sometimes strips of fabric called sashing separate the blocks, but often the blocks are set side-by-side without any divider. The order and consistency of the form of these quilts has led to some speculation that the careful organization, structure, and repetition may have been comfortable to the quilt makers whose lives were being jostled by rapid social change.[186]

Most of the time the blocks in these quilts are quite large (at least 16 inches square where a standard size today is 12 inches square). Modern quilts are usually rectangular (in order to be placed on a bed) but completed Baltimore album quilts were almost always square, even those that had blocks set on point (in diagonal rows). Because of the size of the blocks the Baltimore album quilts are quite large and often were intended for display purposes only.[187]

Baltimore album quilts are also characterized by exceptional needlework, attention to detail, and the range of fabrics used. Many of the early Baltimore album quilts reflected the influence of their textile ancestors as they combined elements of the *broderie perse* style with the elaborate appliqué blocks for which this genre is known. There are three basic styles of blocks included in these quilts. The first includes those blocks influenced by earlier patterns that were then embellished with themes dear to the current quilt makers.

Figure 1. 1999.531 Full View of "Archer Quilt" © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA
The squares were not necessarily set with the design upright. Sometimes they are set on their side. There seems to be no explanation for this. Surprisingly, this anomaly does not detract from the overall pleasing design of the quilt.

The second type is the result of the influence of the large number of German immigrants to the Baltimore area. By 1850 the population of Baltimore was almost evenly divided between English and German background.[188] The influence of the German folk art of intricately cutting folded paper (called *Scherenschnitte*) can clearly be seen in some of the Baltimore album blocks.[189] This technique is much like cutting a snowflake from paper and can create patterns of

elaborate and delicate design. Quilts containing blocks reminiscent of *Scherenschnitte* were especially popular in the earliest examples of Baltimore album quilts and are often found worked in red and green fabric. A common practice was to place a block of this style in the corners of the quilt. Patterns included crossed laurel leaves, fleur-de-lis, and a reel and leaf. As time went on these blocks became less intricate in nature, leading to speculation that the German folk art influence waned as time passed.[190]

The dominant types of blocks found in the Baltimore album quilts are realistic pictorial designs. These are the blocks that give the Baltimore album quilts their unique appearance. They are dominated by bright, primary colors appliquéd in profusion onto neutral backgrounds of white, off-white, and sometimes tea-dyed fabric. Motifs include everything from fruit (including fruit considered exotic at the time, such as pineapple) and flowers to landmarks, equipment, people, and symbols of popular organizations. There has been some speculation that pictorial images in these quilts served as stabilizers, enabling these quilt makers to incorporate the familiar and the past into a swiftly changing world.[191] Details of these various motifs will be discussed later in this chapter.

Flowers appear in vases, baskets, and wreaths. Floral patterning in nineteenth-century quilts reflects an important aspect of the history of quilts and the history of women. During the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, botany became a popular course of study for young women. At the same time, new plants were introduced from abroad for use in American gardens, and women began to take great interest in floriculture and gardening. With the development of the mail-order seed business, flowers such as nasturtiums, zinnias, roses, azaleas, and primroses quickly became popular in American gardens, and floral patterns based on these "exotic" botanicals began to appear in quilts of the time.[192] The Christmas cactus, a plant first

hybridized in the 1840s by William Buckley, was a popular motif, providing proof that the quilt makers were very current on their natural history and recorded the latest botanical imports in their quilts.[193] These quilt makers found inspiration not only in their own gardens but also in the garden magazines and catalogs of the period. *Godey's Lady's Book* began printing botanical patterns that could be used for quilt designs around 1830.

Women whose economic status ranged across the broad spectrum of the middle class made the Baltimore album quilts: wives and daughters of farmers, butchers, mariners, tradesmen, preachers, and craftsmen. They ranged in age from the late teens through the sixties and seventies, but most were in their twenties. Unlike earlier nineteenth-century quilts most album quilts were made by multiple quilters.[194] Not all of the names that are inscribed on the Baltimore album quilts indicate the person who made or designed the quilt. A popular activity of the time was to "subscribe" to a quilt by paying a small fee to have your name included. This was especially true of quilts made as gifts for individuals, particularly departing clergymen.[195] These quilts became the hallmark of a true lady whose greatest accomplishment was the creation of exquisitely elaborate needlework. To own an appliqué quilt was a statement of great affluence and prestige.[196]

Most blocks carried some type of embellishment of elaborate embroidery, watercolor painting, or ink drawing or inscriptions.[197] During this time advances in chemical technology made possible the distinctive use of permanent India ink calligraphy on colorfast cottons of Turkey red and Victorian green.[198] The practice of inscribing squares developed at the same time as the autograph quilt, but incorporated Bible verses, hymn stanzas, sentimental poetry, affectionate messages, memorial tributes, and patriotic references. These inscriptions were often

embellished with leaves, floral wreaths, and flying ribbons.[199] The Baltimore album quilts were inscribed with verses, names, and dates that made them sentimental reminders of the times.

The largest number of the Baltimore album quilts were made as gifts to church ministers, especially those moving to new assignments or going west as missionaries. Some were called freedom quilts given to young men to celebrate the completion of an apprenticeship and "coming of age" quilts were given to a gentleman on the occasion of his twenty-first birthday. A few were made to observe wedding anniversaries.[200] Most of the quilts did not contain batting, indicating they were made for show and not warmth.[201] The quilts that were not intended as gifts were an acceptable form of self-expression for these women, who prized them greatly. Due to the time, labor, and value of the materials involved, these quilts were displayed only periodically on special occasions.[202]

The Baltimore album quilt makers were among the growing number of nineteenth-century American women who were part of a burgeoning middle class. They had the time, resources, and inclination to take quilting to a much higher stage of development. They expanded the art of quilting by manipulating the fabric to do more than lie flat across the surface of the piece. Some motifs were padded to make them more prominent. Fabric was gathered or folded to create extra texture or depth. For the first time in American quilting, women were including multiple forms of artwork and needlework in the pieces they created. This was a bold step away from quilts not only of previous generations but also from contemporary quilt makers in other parts of the country. It is interesting that the stitching that binds the layers together (traditionally the most recognized element of a quilt) was secondary to the overall design. The quilting stitching consisted of basic designs so as not to distract from the impact of the appliqué.[203]

As previously mentioned, mid-nineteenth-century Baltimore was a bustling center of commerce. Tall ships arrived at the port carrying exotic cargo from around the world and Baltimore's own textile industry was thriving. The result was that beautiful fabrics that might have only been imagined in other parts of the country were available in the local shops, undoubtedly contributing to the quilter's sense of creativity.[204] The fabrics in the Baltimore album quilts were chosen with great care and planning. A particular fabric might be selected because the sweep of the print resembled the wing of a bird, or a circle print could be used for the eye. Shaded fabrics called "fondu" provided grace and contour in urns and baskets and in the delicate shading of flowers. The range of color and texture of the fabrics was broad, yet sometimes the same fabric will appear in multiple quilts. Some historians, including Sienkiewicz, believe that this suggests that the designer(s) made kits of blocks that they then sold to the quiltmaker. Others believe that, then as now, quilt makers shared particularly favorite fabrics with friends.

Despite the fact that other album quilts were being made during this era, the Baltimore album quilts are unusual in their ornate character, profusion of symbolism, and the extensive use of intricate embellishment. In this way they are completely unique.[205]

Quilts produced throughout the country in the nineteenth century reflect the differences of the various geographic areas. In the east where fine fabrics were more available and where daily life afforded more leisure, quilts appeared that were labor-intensive and elaborate in design. Quilts from the frontier areas of this time period are decidedly different than their urban counterparts. In those areas, technological developments had not radically changed the way people worked, and labor focused on the daily requirements of life. Therefore, the quilts of the

rural areas were simpler, made of coarser fabric, are less labor-intensive in their design, and more utilitarian in nature.[206]

In the cities, young girls from prosperous families were sent to school to learn needlework or were taught at home by private tutors. Patterns available in publications such as *Godey's Lady's Book* were not as easy to come by on the frontier.[207] This often meant that designs were drafted by the rural quiltmaker or copied from earlier pieces, resulting in quilts of simple design. The farther away from an urban area a quilt was made, the simpler the design and execution became. This is especially true of the Baltimore album quilts. As Jennifer Goldsborough states: "In other words, elaboration diminished as distance from Baltimore increased."[208]

The popularity of the *broderie perse* quilts waned in the mid-nineteenth century and gave way to representational, commemorative, thematic, and patriotic themes.[209] The early Baltimore album quilts still incorporated this technique, as can be seen in several samples that were included in the Maryland Historical Society exhibit in 2001. A quilt attributed to Catherine Mitchell incorporated the new album style but featured blocks of *broderie perse* floral motifs.[210] The later in the Baltimore album era a quilt was made, the less the *broderie perse* technique was employed.

Perhaps the most representative quilts of the nineteenth century, Baltimore album quilts included depictions of objects such as fire engines, clipper ships, and monuments. The clipper ships are interesting because they reflect much about the city of Baltimore and its environs at that time. By 1840, clippers (a name possible derived from the expression "going at a fast clip") were skyrocketing in popularity on both sides of the Atlantic. Smaller ships of the genre were known as Baltimore clippers. The Baltimore clipper had become known internationally as a fast-

sailing, seagoing type suitable for naval service, for illegal trading, and for carrying light cargoes. Its reputation was enhanced by its performance during the Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812.[211]

There has been some speculation among quilt historians that the ships so prevalent in the Baltimore album quilts not only were testament to Baltimore's economic success, but had symbolic meaning as well. Many of the coming-of-age quilts included blocks featuring sailing vessels. For at least two of the coming-of-age quilts in the collection of the Maryland Historical Society, the recipients were farmers, not sailors. The elaborate ships on their quilts may reference the voyage of life the young man had before him, rather than any actual nautical connection.[212]

Sentimental themes in the Baltimore album quilts featured hearts and biblical depictions and references were abundant. This proliferation of religious connotation in the quilts reflects the growth of religion in the city at the time. Between 1816 and 1830 sixteen new congregations formed in Baltimore. Women were very active in the religious community activities.[213]

Up-to-the minute machinery such as steamboats, sailing ships, trains, and fire-fighting equipment represented the latest inventions and were common themes on the quilts. As discussed in the previous chapter on the women of this time period, these quilt designers drew upon the elaborate designs favored in household furnishings, including silver patterns, upholstery prints, and wallpaper designs. In addition, many of the leaf-and-berry wreaths found in the quilts are similar in design to the elaborate ornamental ironwork seen on buildings and fences so prevalent in Baltimore and its vicinity at the time.[214] Buildings and monuments depicted were the newest and most important and are evidence of the civic pride being expressed by the quilt makers. The U.S. Capitol Building was a popular feature of many Baltimore album quilts,

partially due to the general national pride in its construction, but also because two prominent Baltimoreans, Benjamin Latrobe and Robert Mills, worked on it.[215]

The Baltimore album quilt makers included both subtle and direct commentary on political themes and major world events in their creations. A quilt identified as being created around 1845 that was included in the 2001 Maryland Historical Society exhibit is a striking example of the use of patriotic imagery in the quilts of this era. A stunningly large piece comprised of thirty blocks, the design of the quilt contains twenty-nine blocks of elaborate, delicate, and intricate floral wreaths, sprays, and bouquets. The colors and fabrics chosen are consistent throughout the 29 blocks and blend well throughout the work. In the thirtieth block, however, six bold red-white-and-blue flags are united by a chevron, also in red, white, and blue, to form a bunting. The block stands out not only in the brightness of the colors compared to the rest of the quilt, but also in the boldness of the angular shapes when contrasted with the flow of the floral motifs. The inclusion of this blatantly patriotic block in a quilt comprised entirely of botanical elements tells us that the quiltmaker was not timid about including a strong patriotic statement along with her delicate handiwork.[216]

Baltimore earned the nickname “Monumental City” from its practice of erecting significant structures to pay homage to national and local figures. The monument to George Washington, the first in the nation, was designed by architect Robert Mills in 1815 and completed in 1829. It figures prominently in many of the Baltimore album quilts.[217] A monument to commemorate the thirty-nine Baltimoreans who died in the Battle for Baltimore during the War of 1812 is also often featured, adorned with urns, eagles, and laurel wreaths, which symbolize glory, and cypress trees, which symbolize mourning.[218]

The City Springs, designed in 1839, was a source of immense pride among the citizens of Baltimore and depictions of its neoclassic design adorn many pieces from this era. A few years ago some unfinished Baltimore album quilt squares were discovered. The blocks contain fabric pieces basted to quilt squares, ready to be appliquéd in place. One of these discoveries is a scene of the Baltimore City Spring and another depicts the Rev. John Hall of the Caroline Street Methodist Church. Another shows a popular motif in many Baltimore album quilts, the Ringgold Monument, a monument to a Baltimore-native Mexican War hero.[219] The Ringgold blocks will be discussed later in this chapter.

Interesting inclusions in many of the Baltimore album quilts were political references. Quilts were made and dedicated to political leaders, such as Henry Clay, and to military leaders who became political leaders, including General Zachary Taylor. Newspaper accounts posted notices about a public display of the Clay quilt:

Quilt for Henry Clay

The Clay quilt, which we noticed a few days ago,
has been placed at Mr. Butcher's, in Charles Street,
where persons desirous of seeing it may call from 10 to 5 today,
and from 10 til 12 tomorrow.
—*Baltimore American*, September 19, 1845[220]

The quilt dedicated to Taylor reads: "From one of the Rough and Ready to the Worthy President. Mary Ann Hudgins 1848."[221] Particularly striking in its influence in the Baltimore album quilts was the presidential campaign and election of 1840.

The race between Martin Van Buren and William Henry Harrison in 1840 represented a turning point in American political history and was a campaign like none that Americans had previously experienced. This was the first national election in which a president addressed

crowds directly to appeal for their votes; it marked the first time a party campaigned on an official party platform; and it brought partisan tactics such as parades, barbecues and image-making to new extremes. Most states had eliminated property requirements over the previous few decades expanding suffrage to include all white males over twenty-six years old. America was in the midst of transforming the structure of its polity. The two main parties of this era were the Democrats and the Whigs. The Democrats had formed around Andrew Jackson in the 1820s and were electioneering in 1840 under the banner of Jackson's party lieutenant and Vice President, Martin Van Buren. The Whigs were just coalescing as a party. To oppose Van Buren, they put forward William Henry Harrison, who had won national military glory during the War of 1812 and was nicknamed "Old Tip." [222]

The election of 1840 was about style, not substance. The Whigs promoted their candidate by mobilizing an impressive battery of campaign machinery. They massed the party faithful by the thousands in rallies and marched them through towns across America in parades, wheeling floats that carried log cabins and cider barrels. These images were marketed as souvenirs, printed on ribbons and other textiles. The log cabin and cider barrel also appeared in many cartoons of the period.[223] Harrison used the common Whig imagery of the log cabin, cider barrel, and raccoon to depict himself as accessible to the common man, while his opponents portrayed the log cabin as a crude and inferior structure, indirectly implying Harrison was an inferior candidate.[224] Public interest in this campaign was high; more than 20,000 people attended a political rally in Baltimore. The intense electioneering of the 1840 campaign generated an unprecedented voter turnout: nearly eighty percent of the electorate voted, up from fifty-eight percent in 1836.[225]

One of the quilts in the Maryland Historical Society's exhibition of 2001 contains a block believed to be a reference to this historic election. The block consists of a log cabin with smoke curling out of its chimney and a red flag topping its roof. Two raccoons are outside the cabin, one perched high atop a tree and the other balanced precariously on a rail fence. Three stars hang in the sky over the flag. Jennifer Goldsborough notes that this block reappears on other Baltimore album quilts.[226]

There are numerous depictions on the Baltimore album quilts referencing the Mexican War. Some of the imagery of soldiers from the Mexican War has been traced to an 1848 Philadelphia published book called *Pictorial History of Mexico and the Mexican War*.[227] Images included uniformed officers or soldiers, military encampments or operations, or monuments and inscriptions honoring particular war heroes. General patriotic and national emblems were abundant.[228]

In her book, *Baltimore Beauties*, Elly Sienkiewicz describes in detail a particular block from a Baltimore album quilt. She explains that lyres were used extensively throughout the Baltimore album quilts and carry a connotation of eternity and things everlasting. Vases of full-blown roses symbolize a token of gratitude.[229] In the block named "Lyre with Wreath, Bird and Crown," an ancient instrument, a harp, is draped with a hero's crown. The harp symbolizes immortality and the crown victory. The bird is a dove. The wreath surrounding the harp, crown, and dove is composed of oak leaves, native to Texas and a symbol on the Texas state seal. This block honors fallen Mexican War heroes.[230] Variations of the same block are found in other quilts and carry a Masonic compass and a square similar to those on the dedication plaque at the Alamo.[231]

Maryland volunteers participated in some of the heaviest fighting of the war. An emotional patriotic verse inscribed on another quilt is a tribute to Baltimore soldiers who fought in Mexican War:

To the Gray Boys
Guardians of Freedom, of Justice and Virtue
Citizens, Soldiers of Liberty's Soul
This token of friendship I gladly present you
Then guard it from insult and shield it from spoil
Strong be the links in the chain of your union
And never the Soldier's proud precept forsake
Long may you live in a martial communion
And scorn'd be the slavery who the compact
Would break. M.A.B. [232]

In several of the Baltimore album quilts, as well as one of the recently discovered unfinished album blocks, there is a depiction of the catafalque on which is placed the coffin of Baltimore's Major Samuel Ringgold, killed at the Battle of Palo Alto in the Mexican War. On May 23, 1846, at a rally in Baltimore's Monument Square, one of the speakers was General Sam Houston, whose account of the death of Ringgold moved the crowd to tears. Burial ceremonies for Major Ringgold included full military honors and the catafalque was on display to the public.[233] The depiction in these blocks shows a platform with a coffin, flanked by flags, and with rifles and canon balls at the base. In one of the quilts in the Maryland Historical Society collection the center block of the design is a square commemorating Major Ringgold. His monument is flanked by draped flags and sits in a wagon piled with canon balls and rifles. [234]

Another album quilt in the Maryland Historical Society collection contains a block honoring Captain Samuel Hamilton Walker, who died leading a company of the First U.S. Mounted Rifles Regiment in the final battle of the Mexican War. Captain Walker was known as

a dashing figure in Baltimore and this quilt maker's depiction of him astride his prancing horse honors this image.[235]

Many of the Baltimore album quilts contained cornucopias. There are two possible explanations for the prolific use of this design. The editor of *Godey's Ladies Book*, Sarah Hale, campaigned for years to have a national day of thanksgiving established. As the quilt makers read this publication avidly, there is no doubt that they were well aware of and most likely heartily supported this campaign. The cornucopia, the symbol of earth's bounty, could have been a popular motif in Baltimore album quilts in support of the concept of establishing a day of thanksgiving.[236] Although it would have been unacceptable for the quiltmaker to make public comments in support of the establishment of such a national day of observance, she was able to "voice" her support of the concept through her quilt.

Another possibility is that the cornucopia is an important symbol of the International Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF), a highly prominent social organization in the Baltimore area. Odd Fellowdom started in the United States in Baltimore in 1819. Originally organized in seventeenth-century England the purpose of the IOOF was to give aid to those in need and to pursue projects for the benefit of mankind. Members of the organization, called "Odd Fellows," were also known as the "Three Link Fraternity," which stands for Friendship, Love, and Truth. The IOOF had a women's chapter, called the Daughters of Rebekah, which was also founded in Baltimore. In fact, the organization was the first in the United States to include both male and female members.[237]

There are many motifs in the Baltimore album quilts that most likely refer to the IOOF. Many of the bows on the quilts have three rather than two loops, which would be much more customary. It is believed that the triple-looped bows symbolize the Order's "Three Link

Fraternity." The symbol of the Daughters of Rebekah was a dove, which appears on most of the Baltimore album quilts in some form.[238] The Maryland State Temperance Society was founded in 1831 and many of the women who were members of the Daughters of Rebekah also became active in the Temperance movement. A star within a triangle was a symbol of the temperance movement. Another symbol was a fountain of pure water. Both of these symbols were very popular motifs in the Baltimore album quilts.[239]

Eagles graced many of the Baltimore album quilts. In fact, it is difficult to find an example that does not contain an eagle in some form. Usually the eagle's wingspan extended horizontally across the block. Eagles adorned flagpoles and ships and carried a variety of items from arrows to unfurled banners to olive branches. Eagles sometimes clutched a Bible in their talons and often a liberty cap was included somewhere in an eagle block.[240] Figure 2 shows a close-up view of the center block of the Archer quilt, which features a gold eagle motif.

Jennifer Goldsborough found a diary of a young woman named Hannah Mary Tremble who writes about going visiting to view album quilts. She notes: "went to Mrs. Williams' in Exeter Street to see a quilt…it was surpassingly beautiful. The star spangled banner and holy bible—an eagle with flowers issuing out of the Liberty cup formed the center."[241]

A quilt dated circa 1848 includes a block featuring an eagle with a liberty cap protruding from his tail feathers. The liberty cap was a Roman symbol of freedom adopted by Americans during the Revolution as their own. It appears in many of this genre of quilts. Sometimes the shape of the liberty cap is reversed and enlarged or set on an angle to resemble a cornucopia.[242] A quilt attributed to Amanda K. Porter includes an example of a liberty cap and cornucopia interchangeable pattern. One block in the same quilt includes an eagle in the blue fondu fabric, a highly prized textile mentioned previously in this chapter. The bird holds a flag, a liberty cap,

and a floral bough in its beak. This quilt also features an elaborate sailing vessel with flying flag.[243] The center block of the Baltimore album quilt in the collection of the Boston Museum of Fine arts shown in detail in Figure 2 clearly illustrates the popular inclusion of the liberty cap symbol.

Figure 2. 1999.531Center Block of “Archer Quilt”
© Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

Some of the most elaborately designed Baltimore Album quilts are attributed to a woman named Mary Simon, who was a Bavarian immigrant to Baltimore in 1844. There is some speculation that she designed and sold many of the blocks that were finished and put into these quilts. Mary Simon's designs are described as work with a great deal of sophistication in fabric selection and manipulation. Patriotic themes abound in Mary Simon's designs, especially eagles and flags. In one block, a harp is worked in red, white, and blue to resemble Old Glory.[244] Many of her designs also included a figure called "Lady Liberty" or "the Goddess of Liberty." Figure 3 shows a close-up view of a Lady Liberty block in the Archer quilt. Interestingly, the quiltmaker who made this particular block chose to identify her block in a different context from the traditional intent and penned beneath the figure the title "Queen of May."

One quilt in the Maryland Historical Society collection done in the "Mary Simon style" and identified as circa 1850 contains not one but two eagle blocks. One block has the eagle holding a chevron with unfurled flags and includes the Lone Star of Texas and arrows. The second eagle block shows the bird holding a banner emblazoned with "E Pluribus Unum" in his beak, flags form a bunting, and a drum and other weapons of war lay at his feet (including canon and canon balls). The eagle holds arrows in one talon and an olive branch in the other. A third block in the center of the quilt features a dove of peace encircled in a laurel wreath and clutching an olive branch.[245] The quilt in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston shown in Figure 1, with its elaborate eagle center block, is typical of the "Mary Simons style."

The Baltimore album quilts when viewed today evoke many elements of mid-nineteenth-century America: the westward expansion of a growing country; war; peace; commerce; monumental architecture; reform movements; and revolutions in transportation, industry and economics. They commemorate the spirit of the Revolution and the role Baltimore played in the

War of 1812. They are vivid in color, striking in design, amazing in the innovations they brought to the craft, and heartfelt in the sentimental messages inscribed upon them. These quilts provided their creators with an outlet for their creative energies while at the same time providing a sly avenue for self-expression.

Figure 3. 1999.531 Goddess of Liberty Block “Archer Quilt”
© Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

As discussed in the previous chapter on the role of women during this era, despite the restrictions of the culture and society in which they lived, these women were aware citizens. They used a socially acceptable medium, their needlecraft, to make their statements about the world around them. In so doing, their messages have survived nearly 200 years after words alone would have faded upon the wind.

VII.

Deflected Patriotism and the Disappearance of the Baltimore Album Quilt

The Baltimore album quilt era ended abruptly just after the mid-point of the nineteenth century and was not revived again until the late-twentieth century. Occasionally a quilt in this style will be discovered that can be dated later than this time period, but this is extremely rare. It is a mystery, then, as to why a style so grand and extremely popular would so quickly vanish. The mystery is enhanced by the knowledge that quilt makers, then as now, are notorious for copying styles, adapting techniques, and redesigning popular trends over long periods of time, adding their own influences.

Early research into the Baltimore album quilt genre speculated that there was one major designer responsible for the development of the elaborate blocks found in these quilts, and that perhaps it was because that individual stopped producing the designs that that the craze died.[246] Although for many years it was a widely accepted belief that the most complex of the floral designs were the work of one person, subsequent study has disclosed there were actually most likely three major designers. It is doubtful that all three would cease producing these wonderful designs simultaneously unless there was a common factor that affected them all. In addition, unlike earlier nineteenth-century quilts, each completed Baltimore album quilt was the result of the labor of many. The more individuals participating in the creation of these quilts means there is a higher likelihood that some of them would have started to develop their own designs and patterns in the same genre. This did not occur. Just as the early album quilts contained some elements reflective of earlier popular styles, quilts made after the Baltimore albums often

maintained the same-segmented block format, but repetitious geometric forms filled the squares instead of appliqué motifs. The elaborately detailed pictorial images were no longer featured.[247]

Clearly there must have been a reason why the Baltimore album quilt era ended so abruptly and with finality. In her catalogue of the 1980-82 Baltimore album exhibition, Dena Katzenberg speculated on possible factors for the demise of the style. Her suggestions include: the passing of the fashion; the Panic of 1857 that burst Baltimore's economic euphoria; the rise of strong anti-immigrant sentiment in the city; the division of the state of Maryland over the slavery issue; the split in the Methodist Church over slavery; and changing opportunities for women.[248] All of these suggestions can certainly be examined separately for their influences, but they are only elements of an overarching fundamental change occurring in the United States at the mid-point of the nineteenth century. The spirit of national and patriotic ebullience associated with the success of the American Revolution and the early national period waned as the country began to grapple with an undercurrent of unrest.

The era of the Baltimore album quilt coincided with a period of development in the United States characterized by rampant growth and a dramatic redefinition of American culture. During this period of change, developments in transportation (railroads, steamboats, and infrastructure) decreased travel from weeks into days and sometimes into hours. Communications were facilitated by the lightening speed of the telegraph, and published newspapers and periodicals thrived.

Baltimore not only participated in the changes of this period it exemplified them. Reflective of what was happening throughout the developing nation, these rapid changes affected how people perceived their past and created uncertainty about their personal future and the future of the country. The economic, social, and political norms that had been generated and gathering

force during the previous three generations merged in Baltimore at mid-century.[249] Democratic changes resulted in the specialization and isolation of various social groups. A transformation of labor as the commercial interests of the city changed from trade and agriculture to manufacturing resulted in institutionalization of human relationships.[250] All of these elements contributed to the change of Baltimore's pre-industrial village-like character. As the city continued its metropolitan expansion it became less isolated within the nation.[251] The city blossomed into an interregional economy. Businesses and institutions founded elsewhere became established in Baltimore, helping to change the traditional social order because the focus of these businesses was more concerned with production and technology than with Baltimore's former economic basis of distribution and marketing.[252] The actual physical format of the city changed as industries were located close to sources of power or modes of transportation while retail goods and services were scattered throughout the city, altering its geography as it became more urban.[253]

When the textile industry became established in the United States, the need for cotton dramatically increased. The opening of foreign markets compounded the demand. As cotton production was based upon the slavery culture of the South, and with immigration booming, slavery was seen as more economical for cotton production. The impact of the influx of immigrants into the community, discussed in a previous chapter, contributed to the creation of a different social structure in the city order in Baltimore between 1843 and 1861, adding to tensions.[254]

Despite the debate about the morality of the practice of slavery, those who relied upon it became more entrenched in preserving it. Part of this entrenchment was economic in nature, but part of it was resistance to the rapid changes that were causing people to want to cling to

established practices.[255] Response to reformers who promoted abolitionist views was the attempt to preserve and extend prevailing ideas and modes of operation. Reform was seen as a threat to the social order. Meanwhile reformers saw the promise of Jacksonian Democracy, the challenge of westward expansion, and the issue of slavery as key to reshaping the future of the country. Their organization grew in vision and became national in both goals and operations.[256]

As mentioned previously, Dena Katzenberg speculates that one of the factors in the demise of the album quilts may have been the impact of the split within the Methodist Church over the slavery issue. Nearly half of the quilts in the catalogue of the 2001 Maryland Historical Society exhibition have known Methodist associations, with some made for ministers, class leaders, or by documented members of the Church for their own collections.[257] The split in the Methodist community over slavery had far-reaching repercussions that undoubtedly included affecting the lives of these quilt makers.

The flamboyant boasting that had long characterized Baltimore gave way to a more subdued optimism during the 1840s and 1850s.[258] Although there had been a pattern of long periods of economic development followed by brief economic slumps, the national tensions at mid-century created longer periods of economic difficulty, culminating in the Panic of 1857. Trade markets contracted and civil disturbances, fed by strong anti-immigrant sentiment in the city, burst Baltimore's bubble of economic euphoria that had developed during the years of the Baltimore album quilt craze. Events leading to the secession crisis and the looming Civil War engulfed the city creating a financial panic coupled with mounting unemployment.[259]

Improved communications combined with Baltimore's new interregional position meant that the residents of the city were caught up in the tensions that were threatening to divide North and South. Dissension within Maryland was fueled by its geographic position. As discussed in

an earlier chapter on the development of the city of Baltimore, the community was further subject to these tensions by its unique position within the state. Baltimore, with its basis in a mercantile economy, had long been out of step with the agrarian-based character of the rest of the state. The tensions that arose as the civil war approached were particularly acute in Baltimore and its immediate vicinity.[260] Issues of slavery dominated politics and popular concern, replacing patriotic fervor with strident sectionalism. Maryland women experienced the tension of the times and may have felt less inclined to devote their attention to the refinements of fancy quilting.[261] The leisurely way of life conducive to intricate needlework was disappearing. As tensions continued to rise and the nation moved toward open conflict the spirit of celebration of American pride that had imbued the Baltimore album quilts with their vibrancy became faded and frayed.

VIII.

Conclusion

By 1861 the Civil War consumed the minds of all Americans. Women's sewing activities focused on supporting the needs of men on the battlefields.[262] Women became responsible for raising money for troops, making clothing and bedding for soldiers, keeping families intact and caring for needy women and children left destitute by the devastation of war.

Quilts continued to play a fundamental role in the women's lives, but on a much different basis from the celebratory, commemorative, and boastful quilts of the Baltimore album era. During the war the U.S. Sanitary Commission provided 250,000 quilts and comforters to Union soldiers. Quilts on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line were raffled to raise money "for the cause." Documents from captured communities often showed quilts cited among of the spoils of the war.[263]

The war disrupted many endeavors, including the fledgling suffrage movement and the temperance societies, and had far-reaching societal impact. It also firmly closed the door on the Baltimore album quilt era. The craze was not immediately replaced by a similar wave of a specialized quilt form. Some of the traditions employed in the album quilts, such as the segmented block format, lived on. But post-Civil War quilts no longer featured the elaborate appliqué so popular in the album quilts. The popularity of geometric forms meant that the emphasis was on the surface of the quilt, which was again available for elaborate quilting, and became the focal point of the post-Baltimore album quilt era.[264]

The industrial revolution dramatically changed the availability of textiles in American quilts. But other technological changes also affected American quiltmaking. By the end of the Civil War, domestic use of the sewing machine was starting to occur, and handwork became less common, thus changing the style and techniques of the next generation of American quilt makers.

IX.

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