

The following history of the East Bay Heritage Quilters is intended to be an informal perspective of our organization, highlighting key events and people of the past 10 years. It is almost impossible to give adequate credit to all the generous and talented people who have made EBHQ the quality guild it is today...but let us try!

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EAST BAY HERITAGE QUILTERS was founded by a small group of women who had become acquainted through early quilting classes taught by Roberta Horton, Glendora Hutson, and Hope Hightower at Albany Adult School and Patience Corners in Berkeley.

There was still so much to learn about quilting, however. These students also needed to provide support for one another and share their growing enthusiasm for the craft and its history. To mount a quilt show was the obvious outlet.

With these goals in mind, the first meeting of EBHQ was held on June 4, 1978 at the Kensington Youth Hut. A handful of women made up the steering committee; the organization's name was chosen to reflect the unique geographical location of the group, as well as its historical perspective. A flood of 200 people attended that first meeting; 150 of them became charter members that very day.

Many, many organizational items needed to be decided: EBHQ's non-profit tax status; having an address (a Post Office Box Number was rented); generating a newsletter and naming it; establishing a logo and using a banner; developing by-laws; eliciting monthly program ideas; and finding a larger meeting place (already!).

Helen Goeriz of Richmond took on any and all jobs cheerfully. Anya Grant submitted The Friendship Knot, accepted as the name for the newsletter. Peggy Kitchen and Jan Inouye designed a banner with the Friendship Knot motif, and Adele Ingraham appliqued it. Janet Shore, Anne Ito, Carol Schwartz, Barbara Dallas, Tami Tanabe, B.J. Welden, Bess Chin, Darlene Shumway, Joan Hitt, Carol Boyd, Patty Hoffman, Rosemary Corbin, Cathy McAuliffe, Pat Newton and the three original teachers divided the residual "growing pains" among themselves. Their names would appear on EBHQ committees for years afterword, too.

All of these energies needed a unifying force. EBHQ provided the quilting teachers, their students, and subsequent members with a forum to meet the demands of a great renaissance of quilting, one that cuts across generational, cultural, economic, and ethnic boundaries.

The first EBHQ president to be elected was Helen Goeriz, a mover and shaker for EBHQ for its first two years. She recalls that a striking feature of the organization was how fast it grew and how much it was able to accomplish, quickly and cheerfully. Less than six months after its first meeting, EBHQ had grown to almost 300 members and added a very successful quilt show to its credits. "Quilts: An American History" --owing so much to the inspiration of Glendora Hutson--showed over 100 quilts to a public just awakened from dormancy on the subject of needlework, and created a thirst for more and more.

Charter members Ann Ito and Janet Shore fondly recall the amazement that first show created. Directed by Glendora Hutson, whose own collection and talents motivated all those who spent so much time and effort preparing the show, it ran for a paltry two days in October 1978 at the Scottish Rite Temple in Oakland. It was a success by every standard. Over 3,000 people attended. The quilts themselves provided an impressive display of 200 years of the history of women in America. Through their quilts, the women made powerful individual and artistic statements.

The breadth and pace of the work involved in putting forth such a show would intimidate any lesser group of mortals. EBHQ, however, became involved in many shows and fundraisers to varying degrees over the next decade. The only things unchanged were the enthusiasm of the participants and the quality of the products. The tradition has spread to support numerous fine causes.

The Mono Lake quilt (1981) and the Marine Mammal quilt (1983) supported environmental and ecological efforts. "Kaleidoscope of Quilts" (1986), an EBHQ-sponsored show of members' quilts, was a major fundraiser for the Children's Home Society in Oakland; Ann Rhode and Jan Inouye designed a wonderful raffle quilt for the occasion. The "May Baskets" quilt show (1985) featured 65 antique and contemporary EBHQ quilts displayed at Gramma's Bed and Breakfast (Berkeley) in a setting stressing preservation and restoration.

EBHQ was ready to launch a full-scale museum-quality show of its own members' work. In October/November 1982, "Quilts: A Tradition of Variations" was exhibited at the Mills College Art Gallery in Oakland. Sixty quilts were selected from 300 submitted. The fine quality of this show earned EBHQ a superlative reputation in the national quilt community, in addition to generating substantial funds, making possible future projects, not the least of which was the 1984 Symposium, again held at Mills College.