

Label that Quilt

Quilt labels not only give vital information about a quilt – such as who made it, how long it took, as well as for whom it was made and the occasion – they also provide a link to the owner in case of loss, and hopefully, they're a visible deterrent to potential thieves.

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It's always been important to record the details of handmade quilts, and if you have the opportunity to examine antique ones, you'll appreciate the need to have a comprehensive history of the quilt attached to it, as well as some connection to the quilter – a means of identifying her. A look at the National Quilt Register, for instance, reveals just how evocative even the briefest history can be in revealing the maker. The register places equal importance on all quilts, from the purely decorative to the most utilitarian: 'old quilts of all types have always been about memories and women's hidden, often unspoken, language. They carry stories about our history and about needlework and provide a rich insight into women's lives. In the National Quilt Register women tell their own stories – some for the first time – about love, despair, managing, surviving, adversity, friendship, endurance'.

While the need for a quilt's provenance is no less true today, we are also faced with the unpleasant reality of quilt theft, not to mention the accidental misplacement of an item. The labels themselves come in an endless variety – generally utilising a lighter-value fabric with the details typed, written with a permanent pen, embroidered, stamped or pre-printed, and often further