

Fossenvue Memory Quilt

Quilt Components

A story told, one stitch at a time





The Story of Fossenvue

Fossenvue was the name of a summer camp that was in existence from 1875 until the early 1900's. It was located on the eastern shore of Seneca Lake, at Caywood Point. The camp was founded by women, and was a summer time retreat for suffragettes and children of wealthy social reformers. Men and women attended, and both sexes took part in group sports, and also discussed politics, all of which was unheard of for women at that time in history. The camp was considered radical for its time.

They had several buildings constructed at Fossenvue - a main cabin, bathhouses, and several tents. One building remains today, and it is known as the Queens Castle. It was a cabin built for Elizabeth Smith Miller, and given to her by her daughter, Anne Fitzhugh Miller for her 77th birthday, September 20, 1899. Today, memories of her remain strong, as her initials can be found carved into the stone mantle of the fireplace. The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1999. The connection with women's suffrage and social reforms makes this building very important to the local area, as the Finger Lakes area of New York State is rich in the history of the women's rights movement, abolitionism and social reform.

Elizabeth Smith Miller was the daughter of Gerrit Smith, an advocate of anti-slavery, women's rights, and temperance. A picture of the Smith mansion in Peterboro, NY is on the front panel. He was also president of the NY Anti-Slavery Society, a Congressman, and a Station Master for the Underground Railroad. His cousin was Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and she and Elizabeth were best friends.

Elizabeth was educated in a Quaker school, and eventually married Charles Dudley Miller. Their home was the Lochland estate in Geneva, NY, and was a popular stopping place for abolitionists, entertainers, suffragettes, and political activists.

It was Elizabeth Smith Miller who popularized the bloomers, which were often credited to Amelia Bloomer, the woman who advocated the outfit in "The Lily", a radical feminist journal.

The reason we know so much about the camp is because the women published a book in 1901 entitled “Embers from Fossenvue Backlogs 1875-1900” which was a collection of their poetry, songs, a few journal entries, and photographs from their days at camp. A handwritten journal from 1908 was also found, which detailed their daily events. People traveled from as far away as California to attend Fossenvue. The camp motto was “Kindle Friendship”.

The camp is now part of a land parcel owned by the USDA Forest Service, and is there for the public to enjoy its beauty and tranquility. The lake frontage is about 3600 feet, and there is a beautiful beach.



Quilt Components



The main panel depicts a landscape scene of what camp Fossenvue looked like in its heyday. It was re-created by using historic photographs and information from the *Embers From Fossenvue Backlogs* book.

A bonfire is shown near the beach, and the book told of the children gathering wood all day to prepare for the large bonfires at night.

The panel shows the Queen's Castle (Elizabeth Smith Miller's private cabin), the Main Cabin (which had sleeping quarters for 8 women), the Dining Canopy, the Kitchen or A tent decorated with ferns, and the Men's sleeping tent on the far right.

The Fossenvue flag was a horseshoe with seven stars. The number seven was special to those that attended Fossenvue. You will find that flag on left dock. They had two docks, and several rowboats. When the steamer would deliver guests to Fossenvue, they would blow their horn, and campers would send out a rowboat to retrieve their guests and their luggage.

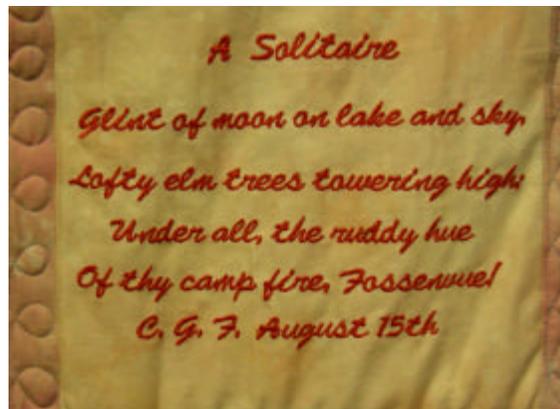
The panel also shows the Zig Zag Path, which led the campers down to the beach area. A woman was added to the photo to make it more realistic. There is a steep hillside above the camp.

The camp motto was "Kindle Friendship". The inside of the Main Cabin had the motto artistically created with sticks on a large board hanging over the fireplace mantle.

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A sketch of men and women playing volleyball is inset into the Fossenvue landscape scene. This sketch was in their journal from 1908. What makes this unusual is that you see men and women playing sports together.



The poem chosen was from the “Embers of Fossenvue Backlogs” book, and we thought it described their summer nights rather well and was very picturesque. It was written by Cornelia Granger Fitzhugh. The book had an illustration with it, and it shows men and women standing around a bonfire at night, with the moon reflecting off Seneca Lake.



Quilt Components



This photograph was taken of Elizabeth Smith Miller while at Fossenvue.

You will also see several signatures throughout the quilt, and we were able to scan the guests signatures from the journal into the computer, and print them out onto the quilt.

The actual book cover, “Embers from Fossenvue Backlogs 1875-1900” is shown above. The Geneva Historical Society donated a copy of the book to the Finger Lakes National Forest in 2003.

The ticket at the top is an invitation for the Annual Piazza Party at Lochland, sponsored by the Geneva Political Equality Club, of which they were very active members.

Quilt Components



The Millers moved to Lochland in Geneva, NY in 1869 after Gerrit Smith's stint in Congress. It was the former home of Elizabeth Smith Miller's brother, Green Smith. Gerrit died in 1896 and the funeral was held at Lochland. Elizabeth lived there until her death in 1911. Anne continued to live at Lochland until her death at age 55 in 1912. Lochland was a haven for the movers and shakers in the reform movements. Guests often stayed with them, and the Millers were well known for their hospitality. An annual Piazza party was held at Lochland in the spring time, and concluded the activities of the Geneva Political Equality Club

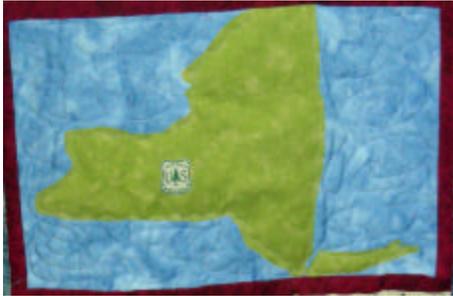
The top picture was chosen because it was the scene of so many suffrage activities, it was the Miller home, and they departed their Seneca Lake dock at Lochland for Fossenvue. Captain Miller's white horses are shown on the lawn.

The photograph is of Elizabeth Smith Miller and her daughter Anne Fitzhugh Miller.

The certificate shows Anne Fitzhugh Miller's life membership into the National American Woman Suffrage Association of the United States, and is signed by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Harriet Taylor Upton.



Quilt Components



The camp is now part of a land parcel owned by the USDA Forest Service, and is there for the public to enjoy its beauty and tranquility. The lake frontage is approximately 3600 feet, and there is a beautiful beach. This appliqué was created to easily depict the location of Camp Fossenvue, and to let the public know that it is public land, managed by the Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forest.



The illustration on the bottom panel accompanied the poem “A Solitaire”, discussed on page 6.

This photo on the top was chosen because it contains a poem written by Anne Fitzhugh Miller for her friend Ruth Leslie VerPlanck, who died in 1885 at age 27. The group did not go to Fossenvue for five years after her death. She and Anne were very close, and were often referred to as “the Pardes”.



Quilt Components



Crazy quilt squares are included on the quilt, as they were in fashion at the time. Scraps of material were sewn together in a random pattern, and they usually always included velveteen and silk fabric.



The Queens Castle was a

cabin built for Elizabeth Smith Miller, and given to her by her daughter, Anne Fitzhugh Miller for her 77th birthday, September 20, 1899. The poem was written by her daughter Anne, and read to her on her birthday when she was presented with the key to her castle. The castle was built by architect Arthur Nash, and completed by seven men in seven days.

Today, memories of her remain strong, as her initials can be found carved into the stone mantle of the fireplace. There are even names carved into the door frame molding of guests over the years. The building is listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places.

The connection with women's suffrage and social reforms makes this building very important to the local area, as the Finger Lakes area of New York State is rich in the history of the women's rights movement, abolitionism and social reform.

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While many people believe Amelia Bloomer invented the Bloomer outfit, it was actually Elizabeth Smith Miller that began wearing them first.

They were popularized in Amelia Bloomer's radical feminist journal, "The Lily", and thus she received credit for this "outlandish costume".

Eventually, many women gave up wearing the bloomer outfit as they felt the attention and ridicule was taking away from their main cause, which was equal rights for women.

The signatures on the panel depict some guests to Fossenvue, as they signed in on the journal when they arrived.

The tickets were chosen to show Anne Fitzhugh Miller's involvement in this club as President. This ticket is advertising the 39th Annual Convention of NYS Woman Suffrage Association.

These documents document Anne Fitzhugh Miller's membership in the Geneva Political Equality Club and the NYS Women's Suffrage Association.



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The seven signature squares at the bottom of the quilt each contain the name of a camp founder – Anne Fitzhugh Miller, Elizabeth Smith Miller, Anne Palfrey Bridge, Emily Dilworth Snyder, James Fowler, Ruth Leslie VerPlanck and Elizabeth Smith Miller. The name Fossenvue is actually an anagram of “seven of us”.

Fabric Choices:

The fabric with the bugs on it was chosen as it is representative of sketches from the *Embers* from Fossenvue book that Louis Agassiz Fuertes drew.

A fern pattern was chosen for the reverse side of the quilt. While at camp, they often picked ferns for their vases, decorated with them, and we have a copy of a fern identification key they made while at Fossenvue. Many different varieties of ferns are found on that land parcel.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact:

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Thank-You to our Volunteers!

This quilt was made by volunteers enrolled in the Forest Service's Passport in Time project, and was intended to be used as an educational tool. We are most grateful for their donation of time and energy.

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Lori Benjamin

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Linda Milliman

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