

REVIEWS

One Hundred and One Patchwork Patterns, by Ruby McKim.

128 pp. 140 illustrations, Index of Patterns.

New York: Dover Publications, 1962 (Reprint of 1931 edition).

Reviewed by Andrea Greenberg

It seems that at intervals of approximately every twenty years or so the public re-discovers the art of quilting and raises it to new levels of popularity. This re-awakening of interest in a traditional American craft has been effected by two types of publications: those of the historian-folklorist (albeit usually in the form of a dilettante) and those of the romantic popularizer. Into the first category fall such notable names as Ruth Finley (Old Patchwork Quilts) and Marie Webster (Quilts: Their Story and How to Make Them). Into the second falls Ruby McKim. However, this is not to state that the authoress has failed in her purpose. Two issues of Better Homes and Gardens from the 1930's both contain articles by Mrs. McKim on how to quilt. This volume also originally from the 1930's, is an extension of those brief articles, presenting a thorough methodology for the novice quilter.

A rather lengthy subheading of the book proclaims its contents quite clearly: "Quilt Name Stories, Cutting Designs, Material Suggestions, Yardage Estimates, Definite Instructions for Every Step of Quilt Making." Mrs. McKim's romantic attitude towards the quilt sets the tone for her book: she sees the quilt as a wholesome product, evoking the virtues of thrift, imagination, cleverness, and the pioneering spirit on the part of its creator. In spite of her rather unscholastic attitude, however, the authoress does fulfill her stated goals -- her book is a complete guide to quilting techniques.

The book is divided into seven chapters, each of which contains two to three pages of detailed instruction on how to accomplish the specific task set forth. The divisions are based on the actual quilting processes: choosing a pattern, selecting the proper materials, cutting and piecing the blocks, setting the quilt together, forming a border, choosing a quilting pattern, and quilting the quilt. Although this may appear rather simplistic, a novice would appreciate knowing what weight thread should be used, and which patterns are best for beginners. McKim's instructions are clear and concise, and do arouse the reader's interest in the art of quilting.

The bulk of the book consists of 108 different quilt patterns, both patchwork and appliqué. For each pattern, there is an introductory paragraph either extolling the beauty of this particular design or commenting on its name, which is often quite unusual (Jacob's Ladder, Skyrocket, Crossed Canoes, etc.). Color combinations are often suggested, and specific guides for piecing the blocks together are offered. Finally, the amount of material required for a quilt of a specified size is estimated: this is often broken down into estimates of the amount of material of each color. A picture of the finish block, or occasionally of the entire completed quilt, is presented in addition to an actual pattern for each piece, which may be traced onto tissue paper and then transferred to cardboard, from which the material itself would be cut. A unique and most helpful addition to these patterns is the suggestion as to which quilting designs match the particular pattern best.

In terms of its scholastic value, this book does not deserve accolades in any quantity. It is romanticized and commercialized: the latter can be assumed from the "McKim Studios" stamp in the corner of each pattern. However, most of these quilt patterns are traditional, and the folklorist would certainly not regret the time spent in perusing this testimony to the popularity of an old American craft which has survived to this day. The book's greatest value, however, is for the novice in quilting, who will find a stimulating and instructive introduction to the craft. In this particular aspect, Ruby McKim has accomplished her task admirably.

Washington State Place Names, by James W. Phillips.

Pp. vii-xv ± 3-167.

Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1971. \$6.95.

Reviewed by W. Edson Richmond.

James W. Phillips's Washington State Place Names has absolutely nothing to offer the folklorist and very little to offer anyone else. Indeed, it is difficult to understand why the University of Washington Press agreed to publish the book, for it violates virtually every principle of modern place-name research, and, since it is arranged as a dictionary, it lacks even the redeeming grace of being readable.

If a place-name study is to have any value beyond antiquarianism, it must trace in documented detail the evolution of each name examined, locate precisely the place designated by the name, indicate the exact pronunciation of each name, and describe the source (whether map, historical document, or informant) for the scholar's information. Unfortunately, Mr. Phillips does none of these things with any consistency, nor does he, on the other hand, give any evidence that he has found any place-name legends. It is conceivable that such legends do not exist in the state of Washington, but they do in all other parts of the United States; if Mr. Phillips has ignored popular etymologies, he has ignored one of the most important aspects of place-name study in North America.

Though Mr. Phillips frequently indicates variations in the names given to particular places, he seldom dates the different names, and only too frequently one finds entries such as "MONSE Original name of Swansea was changed on 24 October 1916 to honor Mons, Belgium, where the British fought the first engagement of World War I on 23 August 1914." But Swansea is neither explained here nor listed elsewhere in the volume. Even more disturbingly, Mr. Phillips completely ignores the final e, appearing not to notice that the Washington state form differs from that of the Belgian.

Pronunciation is often the key to understanding place-name origin and evolution. A myriad of devices exist to indicate pronunciation. These devices range from the preciseness of phonetic alphabets such as the IPA to the less accurate but better known, and often better understood, diacritical systems employed by popular dictionaries. Mr. Phillips invents his own system which is both imprecise and inaccurate. Whenever he deems it necessary to indicate the pronunciation of a name (and his decisions