

Pa Ndaou (Flower Cloth or Story Cloth)

(pronounced pond-ouw) Folk Art Wall Hanging

1983

The Hmong are an ethnic people, originally from the mountainous regions of China who were relocated southward by the Chinese government (along with other tribes) in the 18th C to become one of the subgroups of Miao ethnicity. In the mid-19th century, they migrated to the mountainous regions of Laos, Thailand and Viet Nam. During the Viet Nam War, many of those living in Laos and Viet Nam aided the American effort and when the US left the area, they were forced to flee to refugee camps in Thailand. Eventually, many immigrated to the US, including to Fort Smith and Fort Chaffee in 1975. From the refugees who moved through the relief efforts at Fort Chaffee, a community of Hmong people was established near Mt. Magazine, AR.

Pa ndau is an art form thousands of years old and features intricate needlework to produce elaborate tapestries and ceremonial costumes. To preserve communication and culture, the Hmong developed the pa ndau design as a disguised form of writing. Evidence of some written symbols still survives, but the symbols resemble pictographs rather than any Indo-European alphabet or Oriental characters. Historically, as many Nomadic Hmong were non-literate, pa ndau was a means of record keeping and, throughout history, continues to reflect a strong sense of time and place.

Story blankets (pa ndau) became a way to strengthen the bonds among family members and preserve Hmong history during a difficult time due to war and displacement (forced removal from homes). Traditionally in Hmong culture only women had created pa ndau. In the refugee camps, however, everyone had time on their hands.

Pa ndau (pronounced pond-ouw) meaning “flower cloth,” includes crewelwork, cross-stitch, embroidery, needlepoint, and reverse appliqué. The most noteworthy is reverse appliqué. This piece is a dark blue and brown banner with a white cotton back, using a reverse applique and embroidery technique, depicting village scenes of life among the Hmong people in Laos.

On loan from the Fort Smith Museum of History
FSMH Textile Collection NO. 1983-94-3

Bed Spread with Cluny lace embroidery technique and “popcorn” design elements

Circa 1981

Cluny guipure, French bobbin lace, was first made in the mid-19th century. It is called Cluny because it was inspired by examples of 16th- and 17th-century scalloped lace with geometric patterns displayed in the Cluny Museum, Paris. Cluny guipure was made from about 1862 in Lorraine, France.

Cluny lace is a bobbin lace style, made of thick cotton or linen yarns, and worked as a continuous piece. It is a heavy plaited lace of geometric design, often with radiating thin, pointed wheatears (closely woven leaves). As mentioned above, it is also a guipure style of lace. Guipure connects the motifs with bars or plaits rather than net or mesh.

Cluny joins are made as the last row of the motif you want to join is being stitched. This joining method is advanced level lace crochet. As you see, it is truly a beautiful joining method, and adds greatly to the integrity of the piece. Offered in a variety of colors and striking geometric patterns, Cluny Lace is the perfect embellishment for curtains, doilies, bed skirts, tablecloths, and heavier apparels.

It is unknown when or who created this exquisite example of Cluny lace techniques with popcorn design elements, however, Mrs. Irene Muncie, herself well known for her delicate and detailed glass beadwork, donated it to the Fort Smith Museum of History in 1981. It could be surmised that Mrs. Muncie may have had a hand in this piece of art.

On loan from the Fort Smith Museum of History
FSMH Textile Collection No. 1981-23-1
Donor: Mrs. Irene Muncie

Piano “Scarf” or Piano Shawl

Circa 1915-1918

Piano shawls were popular during England's Victorian era, which ran from 1837 to 1901; however, this lovely piece is dated from WWI as a homage to a soldier's service in France during the “Great War”. It is unknown who created this piece, but it is specifically noted in its donation history that it is a piano “scarf” used for precisely what is indicated, as an overlay over the top of a piano. The crest in the middle of the “scarf” or shawl is an additional motif to the shawl that noted the soldier's place of service. This beautiful piece of silk has Crewel Embroidery with seed stitch filling, isolated, and tufted stitches that reveal a repeated flower chain pattern that is both delicate and detailed with a level of talent and skill that reflect a true master of the craft.

On loan from the Fort Smith Museum of History

FSMH Textile Collection No. 1998-45-1

Donor: Unknown

Quilt “Mashed Strawberries”

Family Heirloom Scrap/Patch quilt

Circa 1870

Julia Perkins York (1850-1943) constructed this pieced quilt featuring four square patch designs around 1870. The quilt measures 77 x 86 inches, uses cotton batting, and prints that feature fabric squares of various colors. The color of the quilt as noted by the family history is “mashed strawberries.” This piece is one of several she created. Her wool pieces used wool from sheep raised on their family farm in south Arkansas. She washed, carded, spun, dyed, and wove her own wool.

Julia Perkins York was the niece of Sarah (Sally) Perkins Nicks-Gibson. Sarah Perkins Nicks, at the death of her first husband, General John Nicks, was appointed to fill his position of sutler to B. C. G. F. & K. Companies of the 7th Infantry, Cantonment Gibson (Fort Gibson). Thus, Sarah Nicks became the first woman to hold a position under the U.S. government in Oklahoma Territory.

This heirloom quilt was passed down through the York family until it was donated to the Fort Smith Museum of History in 1990.

Sutler: a civilian who was authorized to operate a store on or near a military camp, post, or fort. They could sell goods and items that were not considered necessary or supplied by the army.

On loan from the Fort Smith Museum of History
FSMH Textile Collection No 1990-12-1
Donor: Mr. Edward York

WWII Heirloom Quilt

Circa 1943

Family history tells the story of the Long family of Fort Smith as they moved west at the beginning of WWII. Robert and Wynona Long and their son, James Robert, were moving to Vancouver, Washington from Fort Smith in 1943, where Robert Long would take a new job as a welder in the shipyards. Their friends at First Baptist Church in Fort Smith gave them a ‘good-bye’ gift they treasured for many years after. This quilt passed down through the Long family until it reached the protective care of Jim and Joyce Long of Willits, CA. Escaping wildfires in 2008, Jim and Joyce Long were able to mail it to the Fort Smith Museum of History before they evacuated their home.

The cotton quilt features solid colored and diamond patterned squares that display the names of friends from First Baptist Church.

On loan from the Fort Smith Museum of History

FSMH Textile Collection No. 2008-008

Donor: Jim and Joyce Long