

# Guide to the **Tompkins County Quilters Guild Collection**

*The History Center in Tompkins County*

401 East State St., Suite 100

Ithaca, NY 14850

607-273-8284

[www.thehistorycenter.net](http://www.thehistorycenter.net)

[archives@thehistorycenter.net](mailto:archives@thehistorycenter.net)

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## COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

Quiltmaking in America began in Colonial times, when immigrants arrived with skills learned in Europe, and quilting since then has been through many periods of high popularity. Ithaca, N.Y., played a role in inspiring the 20<sup>th</sup> century revival of this folk art. In 1974, at a time when there were no local, state or national organizations to support quilting, Jeanne Greene, a board member of Ithaca's City Federation of Women's Organizations, suggested holding a weekend quilt show to measure local interest, and 500 people came to see quilts on display at the Women's Community Building. The result was formation of the Tompkins County Quilters Guild, which promptly began planning a major show for August 21-27 in 1976. The Bicentennial Finger Lakes Quilt Exhibit displayed 600 quilts from 14 area counties, staged many lectures, workshops and demonstrations, attracted 8,200 visitors from 31 states and 10 foreign countries, and was hailed as the largest such show to date in the nation. After the huge effort that went into this ambitious event, the Guild focused its work mainly on monthly meetings and a long list of services to its members, along with participation in community programs to tell the public about this traditional and ever-changing art form. Starting in 1981, biennial quilt shows were held, featuring members' quilts. And in 2001, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1976 show, the Guild arranged a re-showing of the Finger Lakes counties' Bicentennial quilts, plus some of the key historical quilts in the History Center's collection.

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Coordinator Jeanne Greene’s notebook (red cover), and  
 Scrapbook by Jeanne Greene and Thelma Huhta (green cover)