



Jewish Baltimore Album Quilts

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Album quilts produced in and around Baltimore, Maryland, in the 1840s and 1850s are among the most elaborate examples of nineteenth-century quilting. Previous research linked these quilts to quiltmakers of the Methodist and German Reform faiths. New research, however, suggests a group of these remarkable quilts were owned and may have been created by Jewish women who had recently emigrated from Germany. Given these women's origins, closed culture, and lack of exposure to American needlework traditions, these quilts have important implications for the study of cultural transmission and represent a significant historical discovery. The quiltmakers incorporated motifs and fabrics familiar to the Jewish women from their Central European Jewish traditions, which were rarely found on Protestant album quilts. This group of Baltimore album quilts needs to be studied in the context of the culture from which they arose and the genre they represent to understand their place in quilting and American history.

Baltimore album quilts represent a unique genre of quilts originating in Baltimore, the birthplace of Methodism in America. Within the Methodist church, women played a substantial role. They conducted fundraisers for charities and overseas missions, furnished church parsonages, housed traveling preachers and church dignitaries, and conducted weekly devo-



tionals.¹ Methodist ministers, known for enthusiasm and exuberance, were beloved by their congregations. They were part of a circuit system that allowed a minister to stay at a congregation for only two years before moving to a new congregation. To show appreciation, respect, and love for their ministers, Methodist women sometimes made an album quilt as a presentation piece upon a minister's departure. As a result, in Baltimore, album quilts became closely associated with the Methodist faith of the mid-nineteenth century. In time, a different group of women, Jewish women who had emigrated from Central Europe, would become part of the history of the Baltimore album quilt.

Album quilts are composed of individual uniform-size cloth squares arranged in a grid pattern and enhanced with a variety of appliqué designs.² One type of appliqué design is similar to the German *scherschnitte* and is created using snowflake-like cut-paper patterns.³ The second type features realistic compositions of flowers, fruit, wreaths, animals, and symbols of fraternal organizations. Embroidery, inking, and layering light and dark fabrics create natural effects in this group of Baltimore quilts.

Compared to the large number of quilts made in the nineteenth century, relatively few Baltimore album quilts exist. Jennifer Goldsborough, formerly the chief curator of the Maryland Historical Society, intently studied the Baltimore phenomenon of album quilting during the period from 1842 to 1862. Goldsborough recognized three distinct styles, which she identified as Designer I, Designer II, and Designer III in her book *Lavish Legacies*.⁴

Designer I style has been attributed to Anna Maria Hergenroder⁵ Simon, a Roman Catholic immigrant who arrived in Baltimore in the fall of 1839.⁶ Mrs. Simon was identified in the 1850 diary of Mary Hannah Trimble as the person who "cut and basted" the Designer I style blocks.⁷ The theory that these blocks were then sold as kits for women to purchase and then complete was first put forth by Dr. William Rush Dunton in *Old Quilts* and further explored by Jennifer Goldsborough in *Lavish Legacies*.⁸ The style is characterized by elaborate baskets and vases of layered flowers, intricate floral wreaths, and cornucopias of flowers and fruit, along with swag borders and triple-loop bows. Designer I style is more similar to the designs on English chintz fabrics than traditional



German designs.⁹ It also has a large amount of inking of scriptures, signatures, and floral details.

The style of Designer II is less elaborate and more stylized than the style of Designer I. It relies on padding and ruching to create dimension and has a dominant color scheme of green and red. Very little inking is found, but a large amount of wool and silk embroidery is used to render details. The quilts in the Designer II style often appear to have been made by groups of women instead of having only one designer because the quilts are not always balanced and uniform in design.

The work of Designer III is the most stylized. Based upon the research set forth, it is likely that the group of women who made the Designer III quilts are Jewish German immigrants. Compared to the Designer I and II styles, this work is more reminiscent of German folk art of the time. The quilts feature blocks of stylized flowers and a multitude of animals and are made with less traditional quilting fabrics, including tweed, velvet, and other fabrics. The colors include orchid and salmon—colors not seen in Designer I and II quilts.¹⁰

Jewish Immigration to Baltimore

To the Jews of Central Europe in the 1820s and 1830s, America seemed a veritable utopia, a place where they might escape widespread persecution and find economic and social opportunities not available to them in most of Europe. For example, *Hilchot Yemot Hamashiah*, a pamphlet written in Hebrew and published in Germany in 1822, referred to America as a land of promise for the European Jew.¹¹ Opportunity in America became a theme in literature of the Ashkenazim Jews of Central Europe.¹² In the German states, because of the persecution and anti-Semitism laws, “emigration fever” took hold, and German Jews began to pour into U.S. ports by the thousands.¹³ Many were treated almost as ballast in ships of the American tobacco industry, which exported most of its tobacco to Germany but failed to make a profit on empty returning ships. Emigrants were offered steerage fares of \$16 for a voyage from Germany to the land of opportunity.¹⁴ The Jews who came to the New World settled mainly in the cities, just as they had in Germany. They set up their lives largely as peddlers, shopkeepers, and brokers. One of the largest ports in the U.S.,



Baltimore drew a large number of Jewish immigrants. It offered access to expanding frontiers by a system of canals, enabling recent immigrants to enter the textile and peddling trades. Peddling was considered the bottom rung of the German economic structure, and peddlers comprised the largest group of immigrants to leave Bavaria. However, peddling in America offered a much broader range of opportunities because the barriers to economic and social mobility were not as rigid.¹⁵

After securing their livelihoods, the men organized religious communities. The Baltimore Hebrew Congregation incorporated in 1830 as Baltimore's first synagogue. It began as an Orthodox congregation, but by the 1850s it had begun to undergo reformation. By the early 1870s, major reforms were instituted that caused traditionalists to break away and form new congregations.¹⁶ The Reform movement began in Germany in the 1820s and started to influence American Jews by the 1830s. Essentially, Reform Judaism attempted to revise and modernize traditional theology and practices.¹⁷

In America, reform came for several reasons, many of which the new Jewish immigrants readily accepted. The strict laws and traditions of the Orthodox were difficult to keep, especially since the majority of these immigrants were peddlers and were away from home for many days at a time. Characteristic of American Judaism of this time was the widespread belief on the part of the laity that it had the right to change traditional practices as it saw fit and that American Jewish life derived its power from the "consent of the governed" as did the U.S. political system.¹⁸ One of the reasons reform appealed to the American Jews was the Protestant view of a woman's place and duties.¹⁹ Many Jews saw a need to harmonize Judaism with the modern world. The less-restricted view of a woman's place and duties that was prevalent in American Protestantism influenced Jews—men as well as women. Reform appealed to Jewish women because they had seen the respect and responsibility accorded Protestant, and particularly Methodist, women within their religious communities.²⁰

In the early nineteenth century, Jewish women were not seen in the temple. They were banished to the upper balcony, called the "gallery," and often were screened from view of the synagogue floor where their husbands were seated. The women's gallery of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation's first synagogue, dedicated in 1845 and located on Lloyd



Street, was screened off by latticework.²¹ Most Jewish women were denied an education outside the home, had few civil or religious rights, and did not play a public role in the Jewish religious rituals. They demonstrated their piety only within the privacy of their own homes.

Protestant women, on the other hand, played a relatively large role in their religions and in public life. A Protestant family's devoutness was judged by the church attendance of the woman and her outward display of religious zeal. American society, in this era, expected to see a female's godliness expressed in regular church going, charity work, and social events.²² In her article "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860," Barbara Welter stated,

The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors, and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. . . . Religion or piety was the core of woman's virtue, the source of her strength. Young men looking for a mate were cautioned to search first for piety, for if that were there, all else would follow.²³

Historians have tried to describe how a powerful and omnipresent social discourse decreeing women's "proper place" shaped women's experience and responsibility for domestic and family life and, at the same time, framed the social, benevolent, and reform work of women beyond the home.²⁴ Engagement outside the home had to be justified according to the commonly recognized womanly qualities and virtues. For most, the church and church-sanctioned charity work constituted the only acceptable public spheres wherein women might exercise their feminine roles. Piety was a central component of the roster of virtues assigned to women by the prevailing ideology of domesticity. Women attested to its centrality not only by trying to create Christian homes but also by representing their piety through church activities.

A dilemma for Jewish immigrants was how to make their faith "respectable" to American Protestant society but also to maintain the basic traditions and doctrines of Judaism. They were extremely sensitive to the way that non-Jews viewed them. As American society continued to influence the behavior and ideals of these recent immigrants, change began to



restructure the Jewish community.²⁵ The cultural exchange is illustrated by Dianne Ashton in "Shifting Veils." She stated, "Prior to 1880, Jewish women in American towns and cities obtained schooling with Gentile peers, served a Gentile public in family stores, and socialized, at least occasionally, with non-Jewish friends, male and female. Many of these women joined charity organizations serving both Jews and non-Jews, and others wrote poetry and short stories for both Jewish and non-Jewish presses."²⁶

Baltimore's Jewish Women

The German-Jewish immigrant women of Baltimore in the 1840s lived during a time of great change. Their lives had undergone an enormous transformation as a result of their emigration from a country in which persecution and restrictions had made Jewish life intolerable. In the United States, they discovered more freedom than many had believed possible. The result may be seen in the shift in their religious structure from a congregation led solely by a rabbi to a congregation in which the laity determined many customs and modified old traditions.²⁷

In Baltimore, some synagogues permitted women to take their place next to their husbands and fathers in a "family pew." Although the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation did not allow women in a family pew, it did vote to permit women to be members of the choir.²⁸ Jewish charitable organizations and social clubs began to include women in their membership. Women also began their own organizations, such as the Hebrew Ladies Sewing Society, which was founded in 1855 by many of the women who made album quilts.²⁹ Karla Goldman states, "Jewish women's associations in the United States arose in response to the internal demands of the Jewish community but developed in accord with forms offered by the American environment."³⁰ They opened the door by which Jewish women entered American public society and gave them a respected, and many times admired, position within the entire Baltimore community.

All the album quilt owners/makers in this study (discussed in detail below), along with their husbands or soon-to-be husbands and families, were part of this mass exodus from Germany of Jews hoping to find a



better life and economic opportunity in America. All these women were members of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, where their husbands (or future husbands) were or became officers. They may even have sat next to each other in the upper balcony each Sabbath. The album quilts seem to have grown out of their association together at Temple. These women probably found fulfillment through exercising their needlework skills in creating beauty and expressing their individuality.

The compartmentalization of Jewish religious life left women with few outlets of expression;³¹ thus, when these immigrants discovered the art of appliqué, the ability to express one's self using needlework must have presented a new opportunity for artistic expression. These women might have observed the sisterhood shared by their Protestant neighbors who attended quilting parties and who, with other women in their congregation, made presentation quilts for their church leaders. This in itself was an expression of Christian piety; they had spent countless hours on a lavish gift, meant to recognize a minister's service and not for common household use.

Although many of the Christian presentation pieces were group efforts, Jewish album quilts apparently were not joint projects or made as gifts. Most appear to have been made by a single person and handed down within her family. No Jewish Baltimore albums so far identified appear to have been made as presentation pieces to an individual. They lack the inscriptions or dedications that are found on Protestant album quilts given as gifts. Six of the twelve quilts presented below have family provenance and stayed within the maker's family until they were donated to an institution or sold to a collector.

Practicing the new art of album quiltmaking might have given the Jewish women of Baltimore an acceptable way to participate in American public life and might suggest their increasing assimilation into American society. Norman L. Kleeblatt and Gerard C. Wertkin stated, "early Sephardic settlers, and the Ashkenazim who followed almost immediately, brought with them few indigenous artistic traditions."³² However, "beginning in the 1840s, the second major wave of Jewish immigration to America was composed chiefly of Ashkenazic Jews from Germany and Central Europe. . . . Although the restrictions of European craft guilds imposed limitations on Jewish artisanship, the Ashkenazic Jews



of Central Europe also brought to these shores a unique Jewish design vocabulary as well as skills in woodcarving and in the art of embroidery and other needlecrafts.”³³ Regardless of the past, the Jewish quiltmakers’ mastery of appliqué and quilting to make album quilts represented more than just a newly learned craft; it meant a change in their positions within the Jewish and American society.

The Quilts and their Makers

This study identifies twelve quilts that can be called part of the Jewish Baltimore album style. For simplicity, they are referred to below by a letter assigned in the order in which they are discussed. Six of the quilts have histories of Jewish ownership with many of the details confirmed by extensive genealogical research. The makers of the other six quilts are unknown but the similarities in style and motif warrant their inclusion in this group.

QUILT A, BY RACHEL MEYER WALTER

Rachel Meyer, born in Bavaria on October 11, 1818, came to America in 1839. She soon married Raphael Walter, who had immigrated in 1837 with his brother. The brothers began a peddling business that eventually grew into a wholesale wool business. Little is known of Rachel’s family background or her early life, but she and Raphael had nine children. Six sons and one daughter survived to adulthood.³⁴

Alice F. Hecht, Rachel’s great-granddaughter, donated an album quilt made by Rachel, circa 1848, to the Maryland Historical Society (see Plate 8).³⁵ The quilt is approximately 99 x 101 inches with a center block that is about 38 x 39 ¼ inches. Neither its large center block nor its scalloped edge is typical of album quilts of the day. The smaller squares surrounding the center are approximately 18 x 18 inches. This quilt has motifs similar to some other Baltimore album quilts, such as the wreaths and vases of flowers.

The quilt also has obvious references to the Mexican War of 1846–1848. Two figures in the center square are thought to represent Colonel William Watson and Major Samuel Ringgold, Baltimore’s much celebrated war heroes who died in battle. Colonel Watson was reported to



have died in the Battle of Monterrey as he raised his sword to lead a small group of soldiers against the Mexican riflemen. At this moment, a bullet tore through his throat, killing him instantly.³⁶ Major Ringgold died during the Battle of Palo Alto after a Mexican cannonball tore through both of his legs. The two small funerary urns in the center block may represent Watson and Ringgold's deaths in battle.³⁷ Another indirect reference to the war is the Christmas cactus, which was brought back by soldiers as souvenirs of Mexico.

Dr. William Dunton, author of the pioneering study of Baltimore album quilts *Old Quilts*, described Rachel as "an artist with her needle" who "allowed her fancy rein in making these quilt blocks. She had a wonderful sense of form as can be seen from the perfection of her animal forms of which there are many."³⁸ This quilt looks like German folk art with heavy wool embroidery outlining flowers, leaves, and animals in addition to details embroidered with silk threads. This may have been Rachel's first album quilt and seems greatly influenced by her German roots. There are only bright solid fabrics in this quilt. The colors—primarily red, yellow, and green, with accents of blue—are colors often seen on Jewish tombstones in Central and Eastern Europe.³⁹

Many of the elements in Rachel's quilt, such as the tulip and oak leaf wreaths (Blocks A4 and D4) strongly suggest German Fraktur art.⁴⁰ (The letter and number used to label each block refer to the column letter and row number going from left to right and top down.) In her article "The Assimilation of German Folk Designs on Maryland Quilts," Nancy Gibson Tuckhorn states, "A number of album quilts from the 1840s and 1850s show a strong similarity to German-American Frakturs, particularly in the symmetrical designs, densely-decorated surfaces, and use of such motifs as parrots and other birds, hearts, tulips, pots of flowers, and scalloped and saw-toothed borders. Most are attributed to makers who were of German ancestry or who lived in largely German communities."⁴¹ The German Jews had an art form similar to Fraktur. They created wall amulets which in many cases were small sheets of parchment paper that were hung in the home. Watercolor was used to depict graphics of names, biblical verses, letters, symbols, animals, and designs.⁴² Many of the designs used, such as the parrot and tulip, closely resembled those used in German illuminated manuscripts or Fraktur.



The flowers in this quilt are stylized as opposed to those found in the Designer I quilts, which attempt to portray actual flowers. "Floral motifs and animals of Jewish folk art do not distinguish themselves by their pronounced physical structure, their naturalistic appearance, or physical material characteristics. They are spiritual, symbolic and abstract. . . they do not draw from the woods or fields but from legends . . . and folklore," according to an article in the *Journal of Jewish Art*.⁴³

The many animals on these blocks may be related to the Ashkenazim tradition of naming children after the last deceased relative as well as that of animals given as a blessing by Jacob to his sons in Genesis 49:1–27, "Often the name of the deceased would be translated into its equivalent symbol for a bird, fish or animal: a deer for Hirsh; a lion for Lieb; a bird for Jonah; a fish for Fischel."⁴⁴ As seen on Ashkenazim tombstones, the "artist did not go beyond the use of plants, animals and ritual symbols relating to the name of the deceased."⁴⁵ This tradition of associating first names with animals is further demonstrated in the practice of using house signs that illustrate the owner's first name. In *A Dictionary of Jewish Names and Their History*, Benzion Kaganoff explains,

A house of a Jew known as Wolf would be call *zum Wolf* ("at Wolf's"), and its sign would bear a picture of a wolf and the house itself designated "At the sign of the Wolf." To this day European hotels, inns, and pubs use such signs, and they were also common in Colonial America. Many German Jewish first names which had been taken from animals lent themselves very well to pictorial representation, and so we find homes with such designations as: *Gans* ("goose"); *Baer* ("bear"); *Loeb* ("lion").⁴⁶

Because many Hebrew names mutated, using German and Yiddish diminutives and, in many instances, a Hebrew name was conjoined with a non-Jewish name in an arbitrary fashion without any logical or phonetic merit, it is impossible to trace the images on the blocks to a particular family member of the maker without personal knowledge of the family's naming traditions.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the tradition of associating the images of animals with names became an intrinsic part of the German Jewish



family and the appearance of animals on these quilts might continue the custom.

Common Jewish symbols depicted on synagogue mosaics were selected from Biblical themes such as that of Noah's ark and may have influenced the Jewish album quiltmakers as seen by the inclusion of many animals on these quilts.⁴⁸ Of significance is the fish in Block D4. (A second quilt also thought to have been made by Rachel has a similar fish within a wreath.) Rarely are fish seen in the Protestant album quilts, but the fish is a common symbol in Judaic tradition as well as in Christian religions. Fish are specifically associated with the Jewish festival of Purim, a celebration of the book of Esther. This festival is notable in that it is the only one in which a woman is allowed to preside. Fish are also considered good luck by the Jews; they are immune to the "evil eye" because they live underwater and cannot see it.⁴⁹ In addition, the fish is a symbol of fertility and rebirth and is the messianic symbol of perpetual Sabbath.⁵⁰

QUILT B, POSSIBLY BY RACHEL MEYER WALTER

The second quilt is thought to have been made by Rachel Walter and is in a private collection.⁵¹ Because it follows the evolution of construction of the Protestant album quilts, it is thought to have been made around 1850.⁵² It bears a striking resemblance to Quilt A. Quilt B is approximately 84 x 83 inches. Although it does not have any provenance or documentation to confirm Rachel made it, a careful examination of the style and workmanship suggests it may be her work. The large-scale horse, deer, cat, and birds appear to have been cut using the same patterns as Quilt A. In addition, the quilting stitches—22 top stitches per inch—are identical and reflect exceptional skill. The wool and silk embroidery are very similar in style and technique on both quilts. A cat on a vase (very similar to the one in Block D3 of Quilt A) is an uncommon feature appearing in both these quilts.

QUILT C, BY RACHEL MEYER WALTER

Made circa 1850, Quilt C remained in Rachel's family until Louisa Kohn Beckley, Rachel's great-granddaughter, donated it to the Baltimore Museum of Art.⁵³ More than Quilts A and B, this quilt resembles other

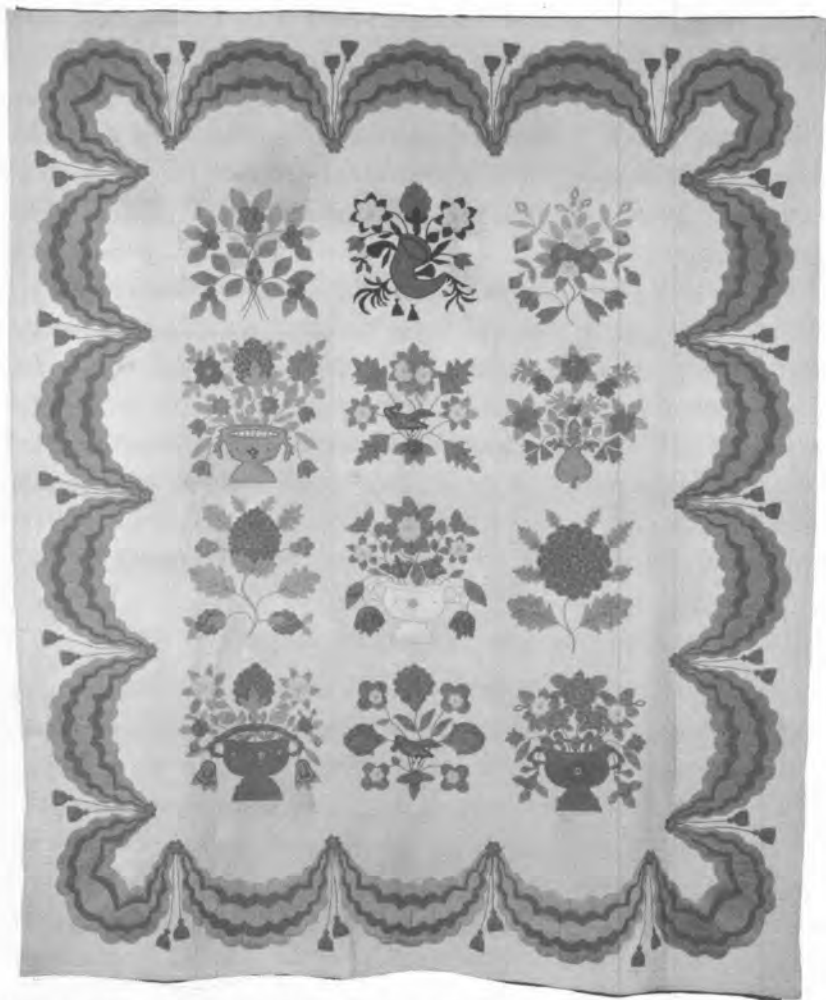


Figure 1. Quilt C: Rachel Meyer Walter Album Quilt (1855). The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph DeVries Beckley, Baltimore, BMA 1986.168.

Baltimore album quilts of the time (see Figure 1). Many of its flowers are stylized, but they more closely resemble the flowers of the other album quilts. They are no longer individual petals appliquéd together, as in Quilts A and B. Instead, they are solid pieces of fabric in which petals are defined with chain stitch embroidery. Moreover, in this quilt, each block



contains a floral motif. If Quilt C was made by Rachel, its exclusive use of floral motifs suggests her increasing assimilation into the American culture of Baltimore.

A notable feature of this quilt is the small embroidery motifs found in the centers of the vases. These motifs closely resemble those found on the highly ornamented tallit and tefillin bags used by Jewish men to carry their prayer shawls to temple. There is an abundance of embroidery on each flower and bird. Block B1 appears to have a shofar, placed in its center. The shofar is a ram's horn trumpet, which is blown during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur festivals to pay respect to the animal sacrificed by Abraham instead of Isaac, his son.⁵⁴ The block stands out because it is the only block containing a very deep dark green fabric. Although much heavier, the swags appliquéd in the borders are reminiscent of the scalloped borders of Quilt A. The solid fabrics in bright colors in this quilt evokes German folk art.⁵⁵

Rachel Walters died on November 12, 1867, at the age of 49. Her family grew and her descendants became pillars of Baltimore society. Her son Moses became one of Baltimore's most prominent lawyers, a profession which Moses' descendants, as well as the descendants of his siblings, carry on today. Upon his death, the courts closed in a day of remembrance. Rachel's daughter Henrietta married Alexander Frank, an esteemed and wealthy banker. Their wedding was reported in the *Baltimore Sun* as "A Brilliant Wedding" attended by many of Baltimore's dignitaries and socialites. Henrietta herself became a pillar in the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation by holding many positions within the sisterhood and numerous charitable organizations. Rachel's other sons held important positions within the synagogue brotherhood, became founding fathers of many of Baltimore's charities and historical foundations, and carried on the family's wholesale wool business. Within a single generation, Rachel and Raphael achieved what many Americans can only dream of: wealth, prestige, and a better life for their children.

QUILT D, BY MRS. JOSIAH GOODMAN (1850)

A very colorful Baltimore album quilt in the collection of the Maryland Historical Society is identified on the back with the embroidered name



"Mrs. Josiah Goodman" and the date "1850." It was donated to the Society by Mrs. Milford Nathan, wife of the Goodmans' grandson.

Little is known of Mrs. Goodman, not even her first name, because the name Josiah Goodman does not appear in the Baltimore census records until 1860.⁵⁶ This absence may be due to Josiah's work as a peddler. Because he was away from home for long periods, his family might have lived with others. It was thought that Mrs. Goodman was Clara Hirschman but Clara and Josiah were not married until September 25, 1855, according to the records of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. Clara Hirschman arrived in New York City on August 26, 1853, on the ship *Germanic* from Bremen, Germany.⁵⁷ The date of 1850 indicates the quilt may have been made by a wife who preceded Clara or someone else. It is also possible that the quilt was made by Clara and the embroidery was added later (after she became Mrs. Goodman). The reference to the Mexican War in the quilt suggests that the 1850 date is fairly accurate. Josiah fits the profile of the other Jewish immigrants to Baltimore. He emigrated from Germany in the late 1830s and belonged to the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, where he was an officer. Josiah worked with his brothers, Henry and Joseph, as a clothier.

Mrs. Goodman's quilt has some interesting similarities to and differences from Quilt A. The quilt is reminiscent of German folk art and depicts many animals and uses heavy wool embroidery and bold colors (see Figure 2). Block B3 has a circle of birds that is a feature in other Jewish-owned Baltimore quilts. The birds surround an elephant, an unusual motif for a Baltimore album. The lion in Block A2 appears to refer to the lion of Judah, an important Judaic symbol.

Like Mrs. Walter's Quilt A, Mrs. Goodman's quilt also honors the Mexican War. Baltimore Jews created their own First Baltimore Hebrew Guards in 1846 to support the Mexican War effort.⁵⁸ By forming their own independent company, the identity of those men would not be lost in Maryland's Militia's "Baltimore's Own."⁵⁹ Mrs. Goodman showed her support for the war in Block C2 of her quilt. This block depicts Captain Samuel H. Walker, a hero of the Mexican War. An engraving published in *Pictorial History of Mexico and the Mexican War* by John Frost in Philadelphia in 1848 has a similar depiction of Captain Walker and almost certainly was the inspiration for this block.⁶⁰



Figure 2. Quilt D: Baltimore Album Quilt made by Mrs. Josiah Goodman (1850). The Maryland Historical Society: Gift of Mrs. Milford Nathan, 53.36.1.

The maker of Quilt D used many different types of fabrics, including plain wools, tweeds, velvet, and solid and printed cottons. This variety of fabric might result from Josiah's profession as a clothier and his access to a variety of goods. Compared to the layout of Quilt A, the layout of Quilt D is more like those of Designer I and II quilts with equal-size blocks and a vine border. It has some motifs typical of the Protestant album quilts, including eagles, floral urns, and bouquets, but they are rendered more boldly.

Block B4, a centered rose surrounded by leaves and buds, also is found throughout the other Jewish albums. This rose is cut from a single piece of fabric and then the pedals are formed with chain stitch embroi-



dery. An element in Block D3, a ring of circles, also appears elsewhere in the group of Jewish albums.

QUILT E, THE REITER FAMILY QUILT

A quilt in the collection of the American Folk Art Museum is strikingly similar to the Goodman quilt. Its attribution has generated several articles and a good deal of controversy.⁶¹ Cataloged by the museum as dating from around 1890–1892, the quilt was donated by family members of the presumed makers, Kate Friedman Reiter and Liebe Gross Friedman of McKeesport, Pennsylvania. At some time, Katie cut the quilt into three pieces, and it was reassembled in 1976.

Katie Friedman immigrated to the United States from Slovakia, then part of Hungary, in 1885 as a twelve-year-old girl. She settled first with an uncle in Newport, New Jersey. In 1890, she married Benjamin J. Reiter, and they moved to McKeesport near Pittsburgh. Both the Friedman and Reiter families were Jewish. Katie's mother, Liebe Friedman, and her children joined the Reiter family in 1891. The family believed the two women made the quilt after the deaths of Katie's infant son and her brother Ephraim.

As many quilt historians and genealogists will attest, family stories do not always prove entirely accurate. Usually there is an element of truth, which becomes embellished through the years. This seems to be the case with the Reiter quilt. After close examination of the quilt, several elements point to the probability that it was made in Baltimore around 1850, close to the time of the other Jewish album quilts (see Figure 3). Fabrics found in the Reiter quilt are present in several other quilts made by Jewish and non-Jewish makers during the late 1840s in Baltimore.⁶² It does not seem likely that Katie would use fabric that was 40 years old to make a new quilt in an old style and then cut up the quilt that she had made.

Stylistically, Quilt D (Goodman) and Quilt E (Reiter family) are very similar. The Samuel Walker blocks are taken from the same source.⁶³ In both blocks, Walker's horse has the same stance and is in solid black. The horse stands on the same stylized patch of ground, and the butterflies and the birds are very similar. The Reiter quilt has a second military figure not on the Goodman quilt. Elephants, an unusual design element on album

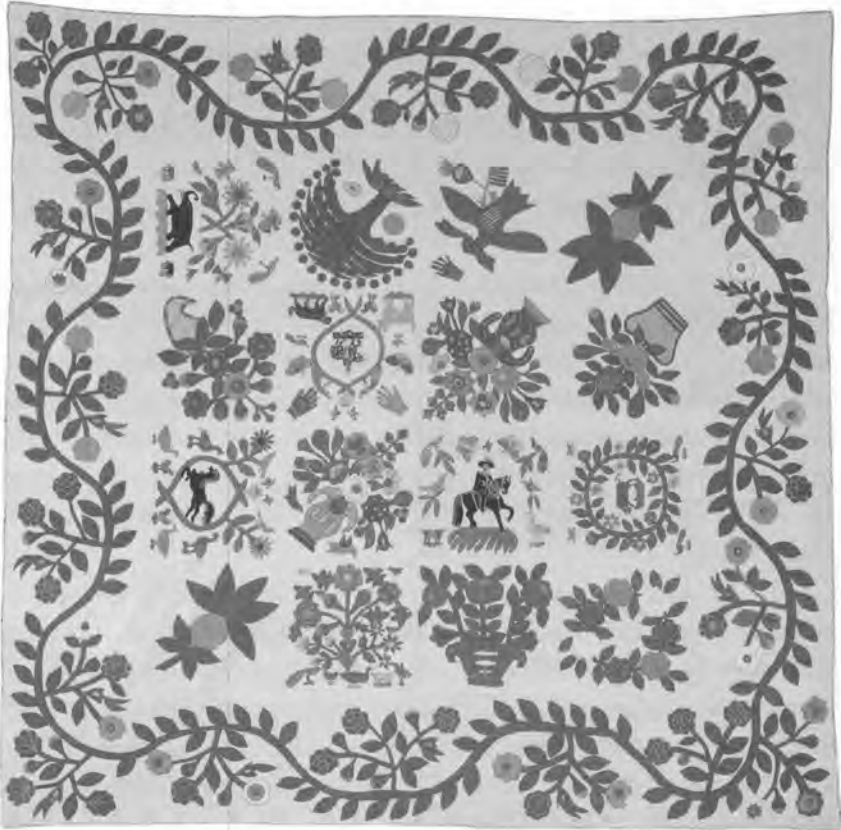


Figure 3. Quilt E: Reiter Family Quilt. American Folk Art Museum, 2000.2.1.

quilts, are found on both quilts. They appear to have been cut from the same pattern because the stance with raised trunks is identical. Blocks A3 and B2 of the Reiter quilt and Block A2 of the Goodman quilt have another unusual design element. Two strips of fabric encircle a center motif in each block, a placement not seen in any other Baltimore album quilts. Block B2 of the Reiter quilt has two hands of different colors in the top corners, an element also seen in the Goodman Block A2. Three reverse appliqué slits decorate each hand along with embroidery across the wrist. Peacocks and other birds surround both motifs. The eagle blocks in both quilts are in the same position with the eagle's left wing pointed up and its right wing pointing down; each eagle holds an inverted American flag in its talons. One holds greenery in its beak, and the other holds a



red ribbon or banner. Both quilts also contain blocks with trees covered with red fruit and three pieces of the fruit on the ground by the similarly stylized roots.

The borders on these quilts also exhibit many of the same elements. Both have leaves on the opposite sides of the flower motif and on the outside curves. The floral motifs are only on the insides of the curved vine.

Three of the four central blocks on the two quilts are very similar in both style and arrangement. Both quilts have nearly identical Samuel Walker blocks. In two other central blocks, vases are extremely similar; both have elephant trunk handles and three slits reverse appliquéd in the center. The arrangement of flowers is the same in each vase with five buds centered on the top of the arrangement. The tulips and the layered roses are made using the same method. Only the fourth central block varies in each quilt.

At this point, it is impossible to know whether the Goodman or the Reiter quilt was made earlier. There were Reiter families living in Baltimore during the 1850s, and they were members of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. Whether or not these are members of the same Reiter family that emigrated in the 1880s and 1890s has not been determined, but it is possible that the family was already in the United States.⁶⁴ Someone in the Baltimore branch may have given the quilt to the Pennsylvania branch, or Katie and Liebe might have set the blocks together. Family provenance has Katie cutting the quilt apart in 1933 to be used as a crib quilt, an unusual act for someone who made the quilt earlier as a tribute to her deceased infant son and brother. However the quilt found its way to Pennsylvania, the physical and stylistic evidence clearly point to its Baltimore Jewish origin around 1850. Too many close similarities exist between it and the Goodman quilt to be coincidental.

QUILT F, BY SARAH G. ROSENSTOCK (1857)

The Charleston Museum owns an elaborate Baltimore album quilt made by Sarah G. Rosenstock and dated 1857. In spite of the relatively late date, the quilt has motifs almost identical to those on other Jewish album quilts (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. Quilt F: Sarah G. Rosenstock Quilt. The Charleston Museum, Charleston, South Carolina.

Sarah, the daughter of German Jewish immigrants, was born in New York in 1836. She married Gerson Rosenstock of Baltimore in 1858 after the death of his first wife, Esther. Gerson was twenty-five years older than Sarah and was well established in the dry goods and clothing manufacturing business in the Fells Point section of the city. During the Gold Rush, he shipped large quantities of groceries, whiskey, revolvers, and prefabricated buildings to California. He was one of the founders of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation and was its president from 1858 to 1860. He was also a founder of the Hebrew Assistance Society and of the Hebrew Hospital. He retired from business shortly after he and Sarah



married. Sarah and Gerson had seven children—four sons and three daughters. They purchased Newington, a large home at Madison and North Avenues. Gerson died in September 1880. Sarah lived at Newington until her death in 1907.⁶⁵

The Rosenstock quilt has many elements seen on the other Jewish albums. The circle wreath in Block C1 is identical to the circles in Block D3 of Quilt D (Goodman). Block A3, a large rose surrounded by buds, is found in Block E2 of Quilt K, which is discussed below. Block D1, the pineapple, can also be found in Quilts E (Reiter), K, and H. The two cornucopias, Blocks B2 and D4, resemble in style and arrangement Block B4 of Quilt H. The construction of the roses is also similar; the roses are cut from a single piece of fabric and then lightly stuffed. The petals are formed with embroidery stitches. This style of rose is found throughout the Jewish album quilts and it appears to be distinctive to them.

Block B3 on Quilt F (Rosenstock), the bird nest within a circle of birds, is one of the most distinct motifs of the Jewish albums (see Figure 5). It is found on three of the quilts discussed below (Quilts G, H, and K). Without documentation from the maker, the meaning of the motif can only be speculated, but several scriptures that compare the role of a woman in the home to that of a bird and her nest may apply. Psalms 84:3, "Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God." Jeremiah 22:23, "O inhabitant of Lebanon, that makest thy nest in the cedars, how gracious shalt thou be when pangs come upon thee, the pain as of a woman in travail!" We can only speculate that the seven birds represent Sarah's seven children.

QUILT G, THE BALTIMORE ALBUM CRADLE QUILT

A miniature version of a Baltimore album quilt in the collection of the Baltimore Museum of Art is also of Jewish origin. Measuring 47 x 39 inches, it is one of very few known examples of cradle-size Baltimore albums. It was in the family of Rose Weiller Thanhouser, the great-granddaughter of Rose Stein and Betty Fuld Meyer, until she donated it to the museum.⁶⁶

Genealogical research suggests Rose Stein or Betty Meyer may have made the quilt. Rose Stein was the stepdaughter of Sarah Rosenstock, the

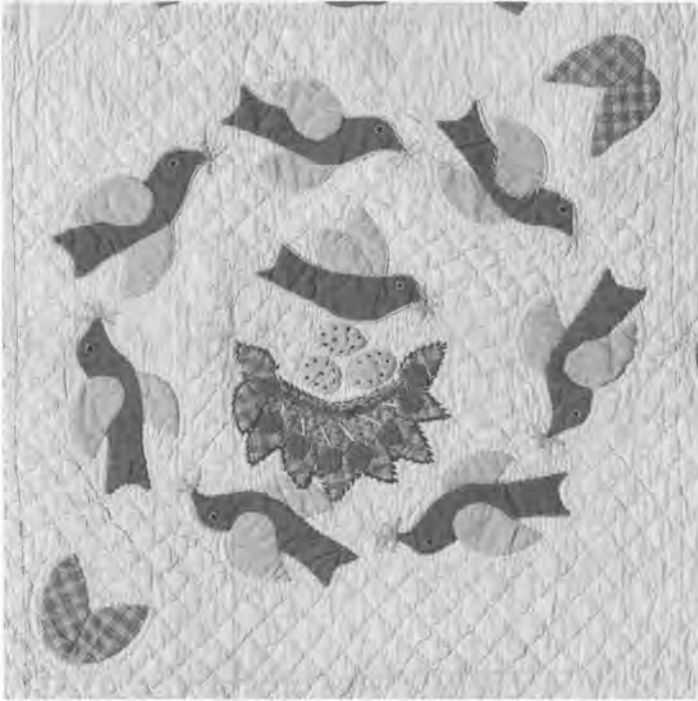


Figure 5. Quilt F Block B3 Detail: Sarah G. Rosenstock Quilt.
The Charleston Museum, Charleston, South Carolina.

maker of Quilt F. Betty Fuld Meyer was married to Philip Meyer, possibly the brother of Rachel Meyer Walter.⁶⁷ Rose and Betty would likely have seen the other Jewish album quilts being made at the time by Sarah and Rachel. In addition, they were members of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, where their husbands each served as president.⁶⁸

Quilt G is of the same style as the other Jewish album quilts and has heavy wool embroidery and stuffing throughout (see Figure 6). Although made on a much smaller scale, it has the centered rose motifs and the recurring bird nest within a circle of birds (see Block A3). The swags on the border are reminiscent of the borders on Quilts A and C. The construction of the roses is also the same as on the other Jewish album quilts. Block C4, the bird with berries, is of the same style and construction as a motif on Quilt C. The cradle quilt appears to have been made by several women. Because of poor restoration work on many of the blocks,

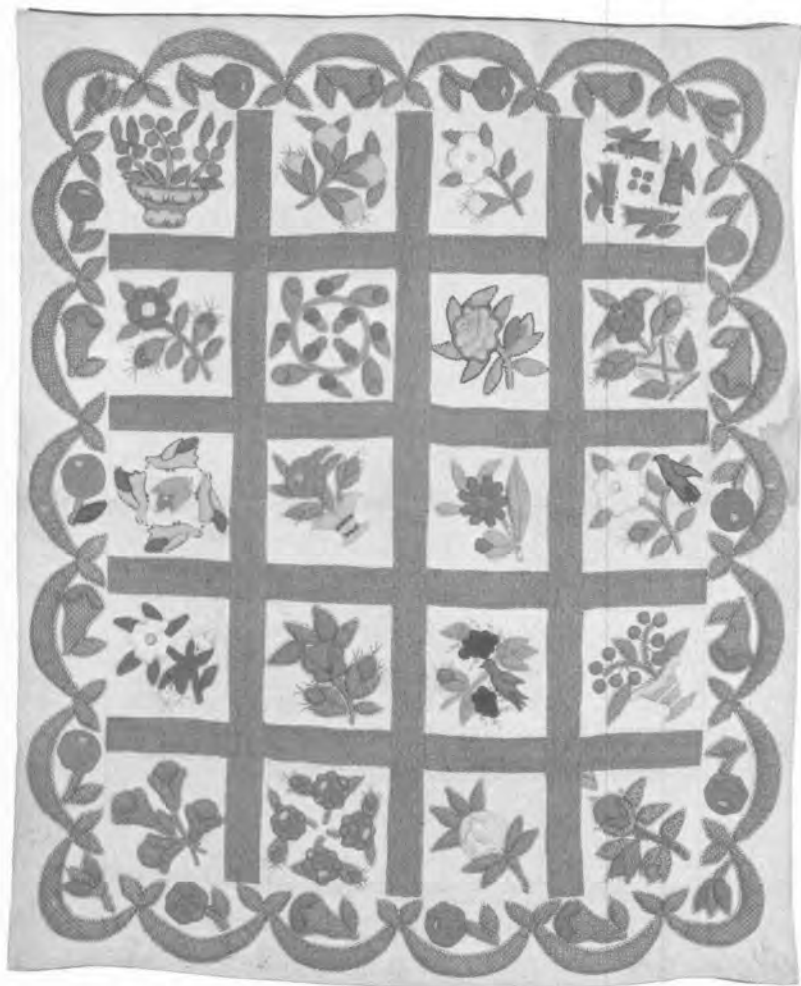


Figure 6. Quilt G: Baltimore Album Cradle Quilt. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Bequest of Rose Louise Thanhouser Halle Goldman, BMA 1996.162.

a definite determination is impossible, but its similarities to other Jewish Baltimore album quilts strongly suggest its Jewish origin, and biographical and genealogical evidence argue for Stein or Meyer as its maker.

QUILT H, BY AN UNKNOWN MAKER

An important Baltimore album quilt, circa 1850, in the collection of the Maryland Historical Society has elements of Designer I, II, and III styles

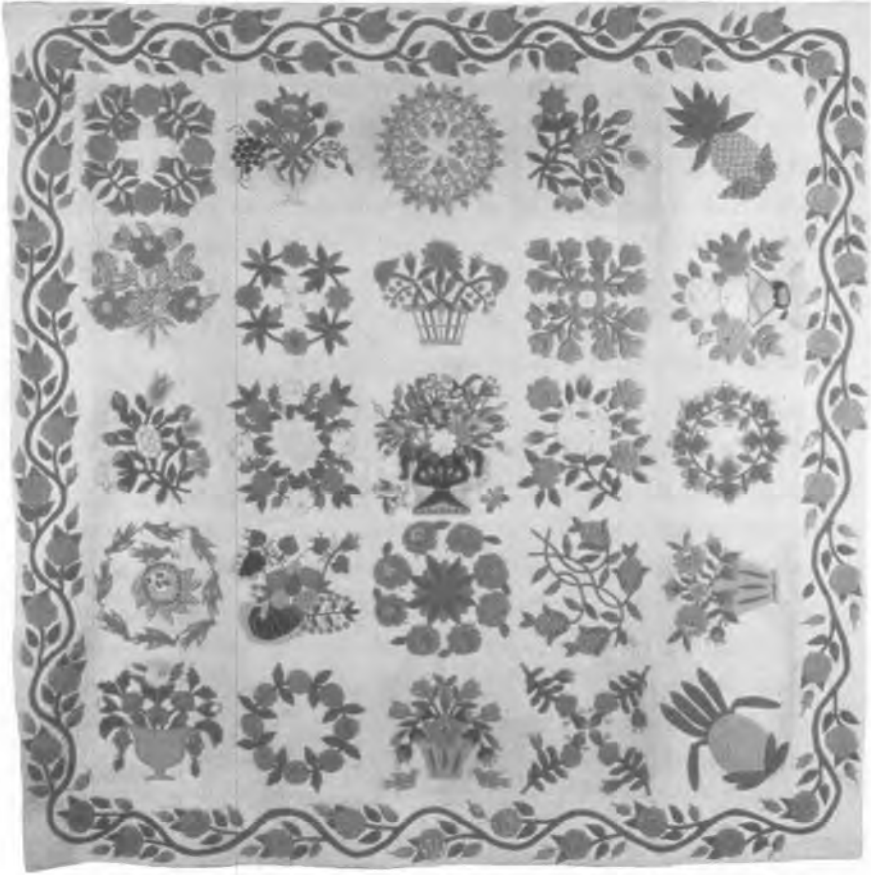


Figure 7. Baltimore Album Quilt H. The Maryland Historical Society: Gift of Mrs. Leslie Legum, 86.120.

(see Figure 7). The center block is reminiscent of Designer I style with a complex arrangement and construction of the flowers and vase. Designer II style is displayed in many of the blocks, such as A1, A5, B3, and others that rely strongly on a red-and-green color scheme with padding and embroidery to add dimension. However, the quilt has unmistakable elements of other Jewish Baltimore quilts as well. Overall, it has an unusual amount of heavy stuffing and embroidery—more than typical Designer II quilts.

Quilt H has many features of the other quilts in this group, including the bird nest within a circle of birds (Block A4). In addition, Block D3,



the white rose, is constructed in the same manner as many of the flowers in Quilt C.

Although the quilt has the distinct features of both groups, the center block is more reminiscent of the Protestant albums than of the Jewish albums. It is possible that this is a group effort among Protestant and Jewish friends and that it simply shows more cultural exchange than the other album quilts. The presence of two quite different pineapple corner blocks (see Blocks E1 and E5) supports this possibility.

QUILTS I AND J, BY UNKNOWN MAKER(S)

A pair of Baltimore album quilts documented in Dr. Dunton's *Old Quilts*⁶⁹ and owned at that time by Mrs. L. Frederick Leiter is very similar to Quilt B, suggesting the possibility that Rachel Meyer Walter might have made both of them. Both quilts have Christmas cactus blocks and strawberry wreaths. The pots of stylized flowers resemble German Fraktur art with the very small pots full of top-heavy sprigs of flowers.

Of particular interest are the cats on either side of the pot of Christmas cactus on Quilt I. Cats are an extremely rare motif on album quilts, but they also appear on Quilt A on the vase in Block D3 and on Quilt B on the vase in Block A3. The sashing of Quilts I and J are arranged in a manner similar to that of Quilt B, with green or blue strips on either side of a center white strip. The location of these quilts is unknown at present.

QUILT K, BY AN UNKNOWN MAKER

Although its provenance is unknown and the style of Quilt K is less refined than the other Jewish Baltimore album quilts, it contains blocks that are present in the other quilts: the bird nest within a circle of birds (Block B2), the rose (Block E2), and the fruit tree (Block C2). Quilt K is in the collection of the Shelburne Museum (see Figure 8). It is thought to have been made by a member of the Barbara Hundloser family, but recent research has found the family name to be Handloser.⁷⁰ In an article in *Antiques Magazine*, June 1944, Florence Peto states, "It resembles the album quilts of the 1840s though it bears no signatures. Made during the Civil War in the family of Barbara Hundloser of Maryland, it is a quilt typical of later work, reflecting the imagination and individuality of the



Figure 8. Baltimore Album Quilt K. ©Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, Vermont

maker and a perhaps unconscious humor. It must have been fun to make. This merry quilt was sold once during the war to raise money for Confederate soldiers.⁷⁷¹ Peto's last statement may suggest that the Handloser family purchased the quilt instead of making it. More research is needed on this quilt and its family connection.

Quilt K is very similar to Quilt F (Rosenstock). The pineapple in the four corner blocks (A1, A5, E1, E5) closely resembles the Rosenstock pineapple (Block D1). In Blocks A2 and E2, a large rose with buds resembles that of the Rosenstock Block A3. In addition to the six blocks already mentioned, Blocks B2, B3, B5, C2, C5, D1, D5, and E3 have corresponding blocks of similar design in the Rosenstock quilt.



The borders are composed of three stripes—two red stripes with a center stripe of white. These borders resemble the sashing in Quilt B as well as the sashing on Quilts I and J.

**QUILT L, BY AN UNKNOWN MAKER
AND OWNED BY JOANNA ROSE**

Finally, Quilt L, a quilt in the collection of Mrs. Joanna S. Rose, made circa 1846 in Frederick County, Maryland, has the most obvious Jewish motifs of any of the quilts discussed thus far, but it does not fit the overall style of the others.⁷² This quilt has a botanical look and the floral designs on the blocks are not as heavy as in the other Jewish album quilts. One block, however, depicts a yellow *chuppah* and under it a table with a pair of candlesticks and a kiddush cup. The *chuppah* is a canopy used in a Jewish wedding. It is usually constructed of four poles supporting a fabric cover over the couple and the rabbi. A kiddush cup is a cup of wine, over which a prayer of sanctification is said. More research on this quilt is needed.

Conclusion

Although born into a society that was traditionally closed to outsiders and discouraged change, the Jewish women of Baltimore embraced change and the needle art of appliqué that was fashionable in the local Christian community in the 1840s. Like their Protestant sisters, they found artistic expression in the album quilt genre, which they adapted to their own cultural and religious traditions. As discussed, these Jewish women were all of similar background and social standing.

For the Jewish women, the making of the album quilts suggests an acceptance of American tradition and a break with the European Jewish traditions which precluded women's involvement in public endeavors or public art forms. The album quilts made for or by members of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation indicate their owners' progress toward becoming part of a diverse community. They also suggest the evolution of a Hebrew coterie wherein traditional Jewish symbols were integrated with the symbols of the Christian community in which their families took increasingly active roles.



It was the beginning of a new era in Jewish American society. Women became more visible and involved in community life, and they took their place along with their husbands founding and supporting charities and doing social work. These Jewish women left an indelible mark on the culture of the city and its album quilts.

Notes and References

1. Dena S. Katzenberg, *Baltimore Album Quilts* (Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art, 1980), 58.
2. Jennifer Goldsborough, *Lavish Legacies* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1994), 3.
3. *Scherenschnitte* is the German word for the art of scissors snipping or paper cutting.
4. Goldsborough, 13–24.
5. Mary Simon's name is recorded in genealogical records as Mariana, Anna Maria, and Mary, and these names are used interchangeably. Mary is an Americanized form of the German name. Mariana Hergenroder married Philip Simon on June 23, 1844, at St. James Roman Catholic Church (Maryland State Archives, microfilm M1575, page 30). Peter and Paul Catholic Church parish records, book 62, page 23, record Anna Maria's birth in Unterleichtersbach, Bavaria, on May 20, 1808, the daughter of Kasper Hergenroder and Maria Eva Sitzmann. She died November 13, 1877, in Baltimore, Maryland. (Board of Death, City of Maryland, death certificate 21870.)
6. Goldsborough, 21. Goldsborough states Mary arrived in Baltimore in 1844, but actual ship records of her passage have been located in the Quarterly Abstracts of Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at Baltimore, Maryland 1820–1869 (National Archives series M596, roll #4, image 0350) and indicate that Mary arrived the the fall of 1839 with one-year-old Catherina. Philip Simon's passage to the U.S. was on the ship *Copernicus*, which departed Bremen and arrived in Baltimore on June 7, 1844 (National Archives series number M255, roll #4, list #24).
7. An excerpt from the diary of Mary Hannah Trimble, dated February 1, 1850, recounts visits to several homes in which quilts were displayed. Hannah states "then out to Mrs. Simon's in Chesnut St. The lady who cut & basted these handsome quilts—saw some pretty squares." Maryland Historical Society Library, Special Collections, M2517.
8. William Rush Dunton, Jr., M.D. *Old Quilts* (Cantonville, MD: self-published, 1946), 41, 119; Goldsborough, 14–24.



9. Goldsborough, 7; Gloria Seaman Allen and Nancy Gibson Tuckhorn, *A Maryland Album: Quiltmaking Traditions, 1634–1934* (Nashville: Rutledge Hill Press, 1995), 14.
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11. Hasia R. Diner, *A Time for Gathering: the Second Migration, 1820–1880* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 38.
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15. Isaac M. Fein, *The Making of an American Jewish Community: The History of Baltimore Jewry from 1773 to 1920* (Philadelphia: Jewish Historical Society of Maryland, Inc., 1971), 76; Diner, 66.
16. Jeffrey S. Gurock, "The Orthodox Synagogue," *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 1987), 38.
17. Karla Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery: Finding a Place for Women in American Judaism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 17–37.
18. Diner, 3.
19. Goldman, 80, "The attempt to find an acceptable niche for women within the American synagogue continued to shape and distinguish the development of American Judaism through the middle decades of the century. Acculturating Jews recognized that American Judaism needed to honor women's place in public worship and affirm female spiritual equality."
20. Goldman, 1–37, 171; Pamela S. Nadell and Jonathan D. Sarna, eds., *Women and American Judaism: Historical Perspectives* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2001), 1–14; Diner, 169–200; Philip Kahn, Jr., *Uncommon Threads: Threads that Wove the Fabric of Baltimore Jewish Life* (Baltimore: Pecan Publications, 1996), 27–28.
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 24. Toll, 128; Herman, 150; Goldman, 10.
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 29. *Golden Jubilee Fiftieth Annual Report of the Hebrew Ladies' Sewing Society of Baltimore, MD, 1906*, 32.
 30. Goldman, 61.
 31. Goldman, 50.
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 33. *Ibid.*, 25.
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43. Yekhezkel Dobrushin as quoted in Avram Kampf, "In Quest of the Jewish Style in the Era of the Russian Revolution," *Journal of Jewish Art* 5 (1978): 61.
44. Schwartzman, 13.
45. Franz Landsberger, *A History of Jewish Art* (Cincinnati, OH: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1946), 81.
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47. *Ibid.*, 52.
48. Rachel Hachlili, "Mosaic Floors in Ancient Synagogues," *Jewish Heritage Online Magazine*, www.jhom.com/topics/stones/mosaic.html (accessed 2/19/06).
49. Eli and Elise Davis, *Jewish Folk Art Over the Ages* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass Ltd., 1977), 57; Ungerleider-Mayerson, 159.
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51. Allen and Tuckhorn, 123–24.
52. Early Designer I album quilts consisted of complex layering of fabrics for flowers. Later album quilt construction of flowers consisted of single piece of fabric with embroidery outlining individual petals.
53. Hinson, 103.
54. Marc-Alain Ouaknin, *Symbols of Judaism* (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2003), 62.
55. Landsberger, 248.
56. Josiah Goodman is first listed in the 1860 U.S. Census, Maryland, Baltimore County, Baltimore Township, Ward 9, page 43. He appears in the Baltimore City Directory for the first time in 1855, which is the year of his marriage to Clara Hirschman. Josiah's brothers, Joseph and Henry, are both listed in the 1850 U.S. Census, Maryland, Baltimore County, Baltimore Township, Ward 9, page 13. In addition, Henry Goodman is found in the 1849 Baltimore City Directory as a peddler at 121 N. Canal. Both brothers, Henry and Joseph, appear in the 1853 Baltimore City Directory as H. Goodman & Bro. Clothiers, 10 C. Market.
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61. Julie Silber, "The Reiter Quilt: A Family Story in Cloth," *The Quilt Digest*



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62. LeCompte Album Quilt, circa 1845, in the collection of the Baltimore Museum of Art, #1976.98.8; Baltimore Cradle Quilt in the collection of the Baltimore Museum of Art, #1996.162.
 63. Frost, 213.
 64. 1850 Federal Census, Maryland, Baltimore County, 3rd Ward Baltimore City, page 308, Herman H. Reiter, 31, Male, Tailor, Germany. Also, listed with him is his wife Mary A, 37, and children Albert, 6, and Mary, 2; Guttmacher, 27.
 65. Biographical card index, Maryland Historical Society Special Collections.
 66. Baltimore Museum of Art accession record 1996.162.
 67. Genealogical confirmation of Rachel Meyer Walter’s siblings has not been established.
 68. Guttmacher, 1–82.
 69. Dunton, 170–75.
 70. Preliminary research indicates Barbara Handloser was born around 1847 in Maryland (1900 Federal Census, Maryland, Baltimore City, Baltimore Ward 18, District 240; 1910 Federal Census, Maryland, Baltimore City, Baltimore Ward 6, District 69; 1920 Federal Census, Maryland, Baltimore City, Baltimore Ward 6, District 72). Also, she married Robert Handloser, who arrived in the U.S. on November 20, 1868 (NARA Series M255, Microfilm #16, List #109) from Bremen, Germany. The 1880 Federal Census (Maryland, Baltimore City, Ward 20, Precinct 7) indicates Robert and Barbara were living with her mother, Catherine Muller, and two of their children, John and Mary (Amelia). Both Robert and Catherine were brewers. The *Baltimore Sun Almanac* reported that Robert Handloser died November 15, 1894. The census records indicate that both parents of Barbara Handloser were of German descent.
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