



# JESSAMINE QUILT SHOP

By Natalie Szrajer

## *A Stitch in Time*



During Colonial times, quilts were strictly created to stay warm in bed at night or to hang from doorways and windows as insulation. Sewing or quilting was a very valuable skill and was often passed from generation to generation. Because quality fabrics were expensive for many families, people became thrifty by recycling miscellaneous scraps of fabric or discarded garments. “Whole cloth quilting” became popular in wealthier homes where quilting was considered a hobby; these families had free time to enjoy the activity for pleasure, not because it was a tool of survival. It was exciting to touch and feel intricate imported fabrics with beautiful patterns and textures purely for aesthetic reasons along with more durable pieces for basic human comfort and protection.

The 1840s were radicalized by the sewing machine. I.M. Singer paved the way with his invention that allowed projects to be completed faster, and more efficiently. Later a sort of quilt revival would occur during the Bicentennial period, piquing interest with contests, elaborate displays, competitions and festivals. The invention of the rotary cutter and strip piecing in the 1980’s also fueled the process, shortening the cutting time to a third of what it was when just using shears. “Strip piecing is faster because the quilter can quickly sew together strips of larger fabrics instead of having tiny checkerboard sized pieces to work with,” explains Jann Boyd, owner of Jessamine Quilt Shop in Lexington. Her shop on Old Cherokee Road offers a wide variety of fabrics, tools, classes, hands-on-training and an embroidery machine for projects.

In November of 2018 Boyd took her passion for quilting and decided she wanted to share it with others, creating a community of enthusiasts. She has a great respect for the knowledge, patience and expertise that the teachers at her shop bring to the table each



week. When the shop was closed for most of 2020 due to the pandemic and many classes and events had to be cancelled, Boyd allowed one to two customers to browse the store at a time. Her nephew stepped up to the plate and established an online presence for Jessamine Quilt Shop along with a platform for online orders. “We worked from a quarantine mindset doing personal porch pickups/deliveries and increased customer service during that time; we are a service-oriented business. Anyone can go on the web and simply make a “cold” purchase. What makes us stand out are the individual classes, expert training, resources, tools, equipment and networking that we offer,” says Boyd.

people appreciate. I get joy out of that because they read the little sayings that I put on it and smile, so I said well, that’s good. You know when I look back now, it was a lifelong journey, almost; I was quite young when I started, and I don’t know of anything that I have found more joy in.” Twitty has acquired awards at local various quilt shows, the QSC Quilter’s Expo, the South Carolina State Fair, the QSC Quilters’ Expo, and the American Quilters Society event.

Regardless of whether you want to create an elaborate family heirloom quilt or a more modern t-shirt memory quilt, Jessamine Quilt Shop offers classes for beginners, intermediate and advanced students. Tuesday’s workshop consists of flex classes that are completed in four sessions. During a flex class, students work on the project of their choice with assistance from seasoned instructors who offer techniques, steps and tips for success. The time spent in class with other quilters is a great opportunity to mentor as well as learn from other students and build relationships. Linda Barrett-Hanslip teaches the Sip and Sew class on Thursdays. Students may bring a beverage of their choice to class along with a current project or come as a blank slate with a world of possibilities.

Boyd suggests that students wait to purchase any materials or tools until they attend one of her classes and discover exactly which items are required for their desired project. Even though there are several pieces of equipment available for student use, Boyd said many students will ultimately end up buying their own sewing machine. When they are ready to make a purchase, her instructors guide them to the most economical choice for their personal needs, comfort, skill level and individual preferences. Routine maintenance is important for the life of the machine, ease of use and quality of the final product. Tommy

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Many veteran Lexington residents are not new to the concept of quilting. Judy Twitty of Gilbert received the prestigious 2020 Jean Laney Harris Folk Heritage Award for her lifetime of quilting from the S. C. Art Awards program. The annual award recognizes artists for not only maintaining a high level of artistic commitment and talent, but also preserving South Carolina’s diverse cultural heritage. In a mini-documentary Twitty describes her lifetime of quilting as a love for patterns and seeing a smiles on her family and friend’s faces. “I guess it was just a love of quilting that kept me going all these years,” she explains. “I hope to inspire somebody who looks at it to maybe decide they would like to try it and make a quilt of their own.” Twitty thoughtfully adds, “Age has nothing to do with it, really. You are doing work that other

Leitner is Boyd’s “go-to” person who can repair, clean and maintain any machine, even industrial grade machines. People are welcome to leave their machines at the shop for various repairs and services.

From personalized courses to an array of fabrics, equipment and projects, Jessamine Quilt Shop has something for everyone. Quilters of all levels and backgrounds are welcome whether their style is traditional or more modern--both are continuing a historical tradition despite the process, tools or materials they choose to use “There’s something meditating about quilting. It’s meditative to do a simple task. You’ll have pleasure in the design and your next one will go faster and easier. There’s satisfaction in knowing you made it,” says Boyd. ■