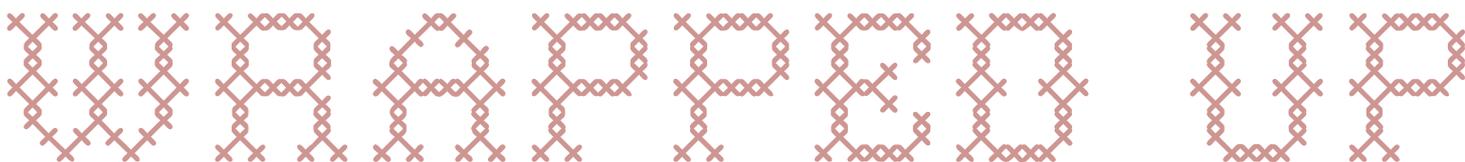




*In her Civil War-era Maryland home, Georgina Blake Fries displays some of her favorite quilts.*



Aside from being a successful entrepreneur, Georgina Blake Fries '60 is an artist. Not a charcoal-in-hand, paint-in-the-hair kind, but an artist of another sort—a quilter. “Quilting is an art,” she explained. “It starts out as a craft, but as you work with it, the quilt really becomes an art form.”

Though quilting has played a huge role in her post-college days, Fries spent her co-ed years studying to become a teacher. Like many other students, the primary education major chose to reside on campus. As an upperclassman, she had an opportunity she couldn't pass up: an invitation to live with the College's first family in Hollybush.

“Dr. and Mrs. Robinson took good care of us girls,” she said. “We were known on campus as the Holly Berries.”

After college Fries taught fourth grade for a year before putting her career on hold to start a family. The self-taught quilter began her affair with patchwork and patterns when fabric swatch cards, left from her husband Richard's shirt salesman days, caught her eye. “I played around with them, making baby blankets for my pregnant friends,” she said. “I didn't really know what I was doing; I just used the fabric for fun.”

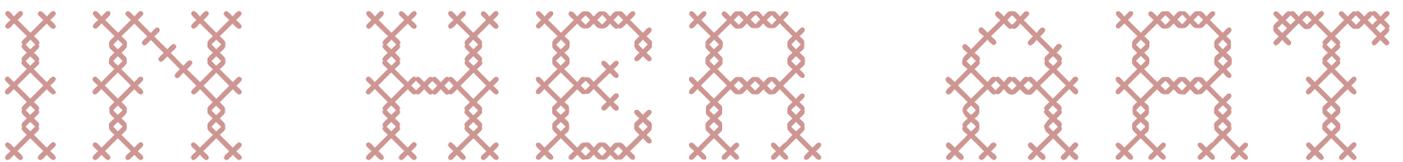
Fries developed her skills and in 1981, her interest in quilting switched from

hobby to career when she and Richard opened Bellwether Dry Goods in their historic home. Before long, Bellwether expanded from a small purveyor of fabric and antique textiles into a full-service quilting business. Fries still quilts for pleasure, but she now serves hundreds of quilt-lovers nationwide each year who take advantage of Bellwether's services.

The number and intricacy of the topstitches help determine the value of a quilt—typically anywhere from three to five digits behind the dollar sign. Time-pressed quilters who want a hand-quilted heirloom rely on Bellwether to cater to



By Cathy Toscano '04, M'05



their needs, allowing them to put together the patchwork top and leaving the assembly and laborious hand-stitching to the shop. “Some people either find hand-stitching overwhelming, have no time or have no interest in it,” said Fries.

To serve her clients, Fries contracts with skilled Amish and Mennonite women to handstitch the quilts. “It’s kind of like a three-layer sandwich,” said Fries of the quilt top, cotton batting and fabric back that Bellwether assembles. Then her husband marks the top so the quilter knows where to hand-sew the pieces together.

Bellwether has grown into a successful

business nationally known among artisans and frequently mentioned in publications, including the highly respected *Quilter’s Newsletter Magazine*. In fact, *QNM* has featured several Bellwether pieces on its covers and will showcase them again in the May and July issues.

Fries and her husband are also regulars on the invite lists to the nation’s top quilt shows, including the venerable Quilters’ Heritage Celebration in Lancaster, Pa.

Though the quilting business now takes up much of her time—and house—Fries still makes room for gardening, attending Navy games, (she and her husband used

to sponsor midshipmen), spending time with her five children and “chasing after” her seven grandchildren. And of course she finds time for her two quilting bees which gather friends to work on projects together.

Even after creating hundreds of quilts, Fries still finds her greatest pleasure in people appreciating her art after she has put so much into it. “It’s exciting to get something finished after many months of work,” she said. “You put that last stitch in and just go ‘whew—I’m finally done.’” But the artist in the businesswoman continues, “It’s even more exciting to put it up in a booth at a show and have people love it.”