

# Thanks to Betty McDowell

## Folk art takes its place among skilled endeavors

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Overlooked, isolated and pigeon-holed into art forms related to their domestic duties, women active in folk art are finally stepping into the spotlight.

Part of the new attention to women in folk art is the result of efforts by Betty McDowell, of Farmington Hills.

In addition to conducting a course on the subject at the Farmington Community Center, Mrs. McDowell has helped her daughter Marsha compile



BETTY McDOWELL

"Artists in Aprons: Folk Art by American Women," a book presenting modern day as well as early American women folk artists. The book is part of a project that will culminate next year in a showing at the Museum of Folk Art, New York. Material from the book was used in the film, "Anonymous was a woman," recently shown on Channel 56.

Mrs. McDowell's book, with its forward by Joan Mondale, details the struggle of women in the folk arts.

"THEY HAD obstacles thrown up if they were inclined to be artistic," she said. "Instead of nudes, or heroic canvases, they did watercolors, quilts and needlework."

Women artists, excluded from academies until the last half of the 19th century, were encouraged to indulge their yen for creativity by creating something "gentle and proper," according to Mrs. McDowell, an art history instructor at Wayne State University.

In the field of folk art, concentrating

on women's role means excluding three-dimensional work, such as wood-carving. Women, with a rare exception, channeled their energies into one- and two-dimensional art, such as needlework or quilting because it was related to their family role.

"Women were encouraged to go into more utilitarian activities. It was more acceptable for them to spend the evening making a quilt instead of painting," said Ms. McDowell.

Folk art, marked by the lack of formal training on the part of its practitioners, reflected the role of women in society.

"In presenting the material in the book, we try to put it into the historical and social context.

"WE treat the position of women in various periods of time. The idea developed that the kind of art they produced is dictated by their role in society," she said.

One of the earliest surviving examples of women folk artists is a sampler made by Laura Standish, daughter of Miles Standish, dated 1639.

Like other folk artists, women were unaware of others who shared their interest in painting or needlework. They were isolated from one another and were unable to trade information and ideas.

"Each developed his or her own unique, individual style," said Ms. McDowell.

Although folk artists lacked the polish of their academic colleagues in perspective, proportion, anatomy and the use of light, they made up for it in their bold use of design and color.

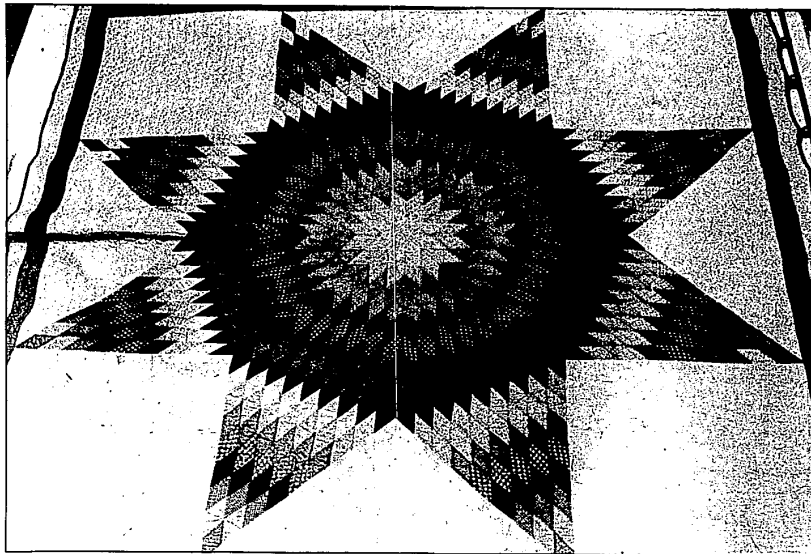
Pattern also plays a large part in folk art. Combined with varying textures, the patterns created a harmonious composition, according to Ms. McDowell.

THEORY falls by the wayside in the face of the "honest directness" of folk art, according to Ms. McDowell.

"It doesn't require theory. It speaks directly to the viewer. If it speaks to you; if it's something you respond to in a positive fashion, then it becomes art," she said.

Her own involvement in folk art was stirred by her daughter Marsha McDowell and son-in-law Curt Dewhurst who embarked on a search for Michigan folk artists a few years ago. The result of that conviction was the 1976 showing in East Lansing of the state's folk art. The show had personal ramifications.

"The more involved they became, the more interested I became," said Ms. McDowell.



This quilt, in the Lone Star pattern, was made by Mrs. McDowell's great-grandmother and pieced together by her grandmother. Today, it's the center of attraction in a room in her Farmington Hills home. (Photo by Cynthia Abatt)

### Registration to begin March 13 at Madonna

Registration for new courses and workshops offered in the spring-summer term at Madonna College in Livonia will be held March 13-18.

Some classes in the term begin May 2 and extend to July 25, while others begin in mid-June and meet for shorter blocks of time or on weekends. Many classes are scheduled for weekends.

Registration may be completed from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday-Friday; or from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday during registration week at the college's Student Service Center, Schoolcraft at Levan at 1-56.

A complete schedule of classes may

be obtained by calling the admission office.

For employed persons or upper division students in business administration, classes are scheduled in such areas as administration of health care institutions; special problems in international business; marketing research and analysis; and decision making with statistics. Computer science and intermediate accounting also are scheduled.

OF SPECIAL interest to in-service teachers are four-week introductory to the metric system, musical experience for the disabled child, art for elementary school teach-

ers, and introductory courses leading to certification to teach emotionally impaired students.

For professional development or pleasure, the college is offering classes in stained glass design, painting in watercolors and acrylics, piano instruction for the adult beginner, and a workshop in basic clothing construction.

High school students who may wish to reinforce pre-college skills or earn dual credit may register for non-professional courses such as general psychology, world problems, American

government, creative writing, or introduction to general chemistry. There also is a workshop in vocabulary building.

Madonna is a member of the Catholic College Consortium and students from other member colleges in the area may register for classes as visiting students. Other persons, including adults, are welcome to register as special students before formal admission.

The college offers two- and four-year degree programs and is accredited by the North Central Association of Schools. Tuition is \$39 per credit hour.

## THE INSIDE \* ANGLE

Coffee once again pops up in THE INSIDE ANGLE\* as, for the eighth consecutive year, the Oakland County Easter Seal Society is sponsoring Coffee Day on Good Friday, March 24.

"BUCK-A-CUP—BRACE A CHILD" campaign is co-sponsored by the Michigan Restaurant Association and this year 135 restaurants will be participating—twelve of which are in the Farmington area. It works like this: Coffee Day buttons are now on sale for \$1 and anyone wearing one on Good Friday may drink coffee free at participating restaurants. At the price of coffee these days, that's not a bad deal. Participating restaurants in the Farmington area are all five Big Boys, the Farmington Elks, the Flame, Landmark, Roman Terrace, Clamdiggers and the two Pizza Huts. So percolate on down and have a few cups.

\*JORGE PACHEO has been selected to guide the Farmington Soccer Club for the coming year. The Farmington Soccer Club teams will compete in the Western Suburban Soccer League with play scheduled to begin April 18. For all you folks who have hopes of playing for that internationally famous Detroit Express someday, come on down and get in shape with the Farmington league first. Openings exist for girls at the 10 and years and younger bracket, 12 and under, and 14 and under. A waiting list is being kept for the 19 and younger age bracket. In the boys' division there are openings for the 10 and unders, 12 and under, 14 and under, and 16 and under. Specific information about the league can be had by calling 533-0027 or 861-4835.

\*ROOTS, ANYBODY? The Farmington Genealogical Society will meet at the Downtown Farmington Library, 2350 Liberty, on March 21 at 8 p.m. MARY JO PUGH, reference archivist of the Michigan Historical Collection, University of Michigan, will present a talk on her work at the Bentley Library on the U-M campus. All interested persons are invited to attend. For further information call Beatrice Sisty at 474-3820.

\*UP THEY GO into the wild blue yonder. Those are three local youths from the Farmington Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol. They have been chosen as cadets of the quarter by their chapter. They are STAFF SGT. ROTH SNIVELY, SGT. MARISSA BROWN and CADET AIRMAN ANN WILLIAMSON. Congratulations.

\*THE CONSUMER Federation of America likes somebody in Washington, anyhow. U.S. REP. WILLIAM BRODHEAD (D-Detroit), whose district includes both Farmington and Farmington

Hills, was given an 88 per cent for his actions during the 94th session and 85 per cent during the current term. Let's see, that must be about a B+.

"THE LIST of best sellers didn't rank "Endangered Species in the United States" or "Wetlands and Wildlife." But these are the two top sellers down at the National Wildlife Federation. "Endangered Species" sold 55,843 copies, while the wetlands publication came in a close second with a sale of 53,812. Among children, the most popular publications were "Wildlife Notes," a series of papers on wild animals, ranging from toads to whales. The most popular of these was a report on the California condor, a big, rare and endangered bird. Raccoons, which are found in 48 states, were the most popular animal in this series. Most NWF publications are offered free of charge for the first copy, with additional copies at 10-25 cents each. A free listing of the publications offered can be obtained by writing Education Catalog, National Wildlife Federation, 1412 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington D.C. 20036.

"THE LATE SEN. HUBERT HUMPHREY was a pharmacist before he threw his hat into the political ring. In commemoration of the senator, the trade magazine American Druggist has announced the establishment of a \$2,000 annual award to encourage pharmacy students to provide health services for the underprivileged. The deans of all 72 U.S. pharmacy schools have been invited to nominate students they consider eligible for the award. The final selection will be made by the editors of American Druggist.

\*OKAY, HERE comes spring and as all pet owners realize, now is the time for shedding hair. Shedding for domestic animals living indoors is a year-round ordeal, according to ROBERT STEAR DVM. Lack of exercise, indoor heating and the extra hours of artificial daylight combine to produce a steady, sometimes annoying hair loss. Makes you sort of wonder when you look at your own balding pate. But according to the good vet, shedding is a natural process, for animals, anyway. He recommends proper grooming to aid the process along. He warns that in the beginning you may need a friend to restrain the pet if it persists in wriggling away. So, all you Great Dane owners, have a party, invite everyone you know, and groom away.

Don't forget, drop us a note at THE INSIDE ANGLE, P.O. BOX 69, SOUTHFIELD, MI 48037.

### SELF-ASSURANCE

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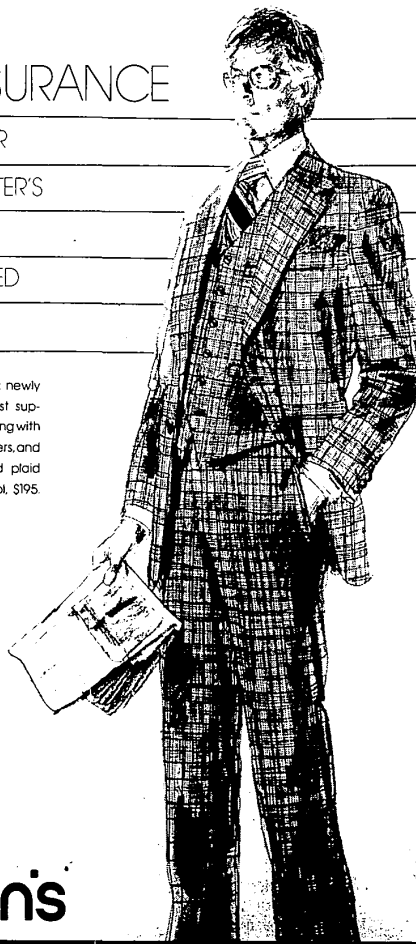
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