



# Quilt square travels the U.S.

By B.D. Tharp

Although you can't tell by looking at the Dresden Plate quilt square framed and hanging on the wall of the Wichita home of Robert Troutman, it is a well-traveled piece of stitchery.

Troutman was five when his family moved to a farm in Worth County, Missouri. It was the 1930's and the ladies in the area got together and started a sewing group called the Amity Club, named after the local school.

"The sewing group went to different members' homes every month. In the summer they would bring food and the kids would play baseball and pitch horseshoes and everyone would have a picnic lunch.

"The men would work on machinery or help someone get a crop in if they needed it," he said. The women sewed most of the day.

"In the winter the gals would stay inside and sew. I remember when they had a big quilt on a frame and they'd all be sitting around sewing it together and talking. They were all good-natured ladies. In 1938, the group decided to create a quilt—one square for each member.

"The center is a yellow circle with their names embroidered on it. It's an 18-inch square with 17 petals around the circle," said Robert. "I was 12 in 1938 when they started it."

For some reason the Amity Club quilt was never finished and the embroidered squares ended up in the bottom of a trunk owned by the head of the group.

"That trunk traveled from Missouri to Oklahoma then to Texas with the children of that club lady. Then from Texas it went to California and that lady (daughter of

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A well-traveled quilt square—Robert Troutman holds a framed quilt square made by his mother in the 1930's. The square, part of a quilting project by a community group in Worth County, Missouri, where Troutman grew up, was never finished and wound up traveling around the United States in the bottom of a trunk.

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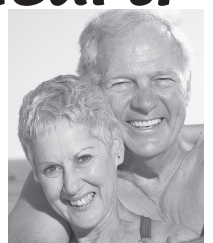
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# Quilt square

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the Amity Club leader) decided to clean out the trunk and found them in a paper sack in the bottom. There were 13 squares and they all had ladies' names on them," said Robert.

The woman sent the squares back to a cousin in Missouri who went to the Worth County seat in Grant City and the Times-Tribune newspaper office to see if they could help identify the families.

In 2004 she called Robert to see if he knew a Gladys Troutman—his mother. She mailed him the quilt square with Gladys' name on it. Robert's youngest daughter, Patricia, who lives in Derby, took the square and it went with her daughter to Pennsylvania where she finished embroidering the edges, using designs penciled in by their grandmother. Once that was finished, Patricia put a border around the

quilt square and framed it.

"That quilt square did a lot of traveling," Robert said.

The last time he heard from anyone in Missouri, they had found nine relatives of the 13 club members to take the squares.

"My mother was born in Colorado," he said. "Then moved to Arizona. She was working in the railroad office when she met my father; he was an auditor for the railroad. They got married in San Francisco. My sister was born in Michigan and then I was born in Atlanta in 1926."

After graduating from high school in 1944, Robert joined the Navy and was discharged in 1946. After his time in the service, he married his high school sweetheart, Phoebe Lou. They farmed in Iowa for six years but in 1952 bad weather ruined the alfalfa crop and he couldn't get any corn planted.

"The newspaper said Boeing needed workers, so on Labor Day I drove to

Wichita and got hired the next day for \$1.49 an hour," said Robert.

He worked at Boeing for 33 years and he and Phoebe Lou raised their four children in Wichita.

Robert did a lot of traveling for Boeing, from coast to coast and border to border, so he took his family whenever he could. "We visited 22 national parks and 17 different Air Force bases," he said. He retired in 1988 to a farm south of Wichita.

"We moved south of town into a new house the Fourth of July in 1958," he said. "I raised a good garden until all the kids left and the wife passed away, just 19 days short of our 49<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

"Phoebe Lou would can tomatoes, green beans, apples and the like."

He sold off the additional acreage and now enjoys caring for his half acre. "I still have one apple tree that is close to 40 years old and a pear tree. I also have some pecan trees," he said.

"I had a good pecan crop this year,

but the squirrels ate two-thirds of them. I counted six squirrels picking them for me. I also have a gooseberry bush, wild raspberries and three rows of blackberries. It keeps me busy," Robert said, along with the three animals he calls his "kids". When he sits down in his chair the cat, Molly Boy, always jumps in his lap. The Miniature Doberman and Chihuahua snuggle in beside him.

He's also proud of his family. His oldest daughter, Cherie teaches special education in Canada. His two sons, Bill and John, are computer programmers living in Arkansas. His youngest daughter, Patricia, is a secretary at Derby High School. He has six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

"All the kids, except Bill, were born in Kansas. My mother was born in Colorado and my dad was born in Indiana. We were born all spread out," he said.

And like the quilt square they have all traveled far.

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