

**The Peace and Plenty Coverlet, the Great Chicago Fire,  
and a Handmade Loom:  
A Material Culture Exhibit of Artifacts from the Ancestors of Barbara Booth**

By Rachel Hein, Chapman Center for Rural Studies, 2018

Editorial Assistance: M.J. Morgan and Kaitlyn Stump

Photography by Brandon Williams



“Peace and Plenty”: the name of a popular design pattern used when making sections for woven coverlets in the nineteenth century. Photograph courtesy of Barbara Booth.

This study covers the material culture of five selected artifacts and a brief history of the migration of Barbara Booth’s ancestors to Kansas. Each artifact has a story attached to it that gives a glimpse into the amazing history and craftsmanship in a single family, passed down through the generations. This paper uses photography, field work, interviews, research into arts and crafts, and many original primary sources from the family.

Rachel Hein will graduate in December, 2018, with a BA in history from Kansas State University.  
She was a research intern for Chapman Center for Rural Studies, spring, 2017.

## Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Kansas Settlement Map	3
The Origin Towns: West Virginia and Illinois	3
Kansas Settlements	5
The Artifacts and Their Stories	12
Deacon's Chair	12
Peace and Plenty Coverlet	14
Flying Geese Quilt	18
Covered Wagon Rocking Chair	21
Father's Loom	23
Photographs of Diamond Springs	26
Bibliography	28

## Introduction

At the beginning of a project, a person sometimes knows precisely what she is going to discover. Other times, as with this project brought forward by Mrs. Barbara Booth, a researcher will be caught completely off guard with new information she collects along the way, changing her initial view. Mrs. Booth introduced the interesting prospect of doing a material culture study over artifacts that have been in her family for many generations. Diamond Springs was also an important location in this project too, as many of these artifacts came from ancestors who had lived in that once thriving town close to the original Santa Fe Trail. However, this project turned out to be much more intricate than originally thought.

After meeting with Barbara Booth and narrowing down the plethora of artifacts to five, the history behind each object began to expand to cover the 1800s and many different places across the United States. There was also the immense surprise and excitement to discover that most of the five artifacts chosen were created by the original owner who could be identified. The Peace and Plenty Coverlet, Covered Wagon Rocking Chair, Flying Geese Quilt, and Father's Loom were either pieced, built, or sewed by at least one of Mrs. Booth's ancestors. The techniques used to create each artifact did not die out with the owner, either; instead, this family passed on skills of their crafts to each family member, so that one day they too might teach their own children. While the Deacon's Chair origin is not clearly known, it also served a grand purpose in the family's history.

Following the trail of the Loomis, Rude, Symes, and Drayer families from West Virginia, through Illinois, and, finally to Kansas, the reader will have a better understanding of the rich culture and history of homestead America.



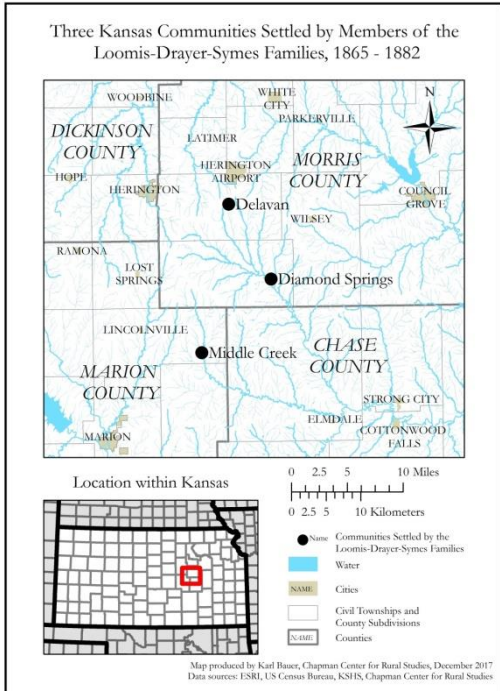
Photograph of *Idle Hour Pool Hall in Clay Center* wooden figures made by Mrs. Booth's son, Mark Booth. Mark learned woodworking from Mrs. Booth's father, Lester Henry Drayer, which further proves the passing down of skills in the family. Photograph by Brandon Williams, April 8, 2017.



Rachel Hein and Mrs. Booth at Mrs. Booth’s Clay Center home. Photo by Brandon Williams. December 2016.

### A Kansas Settlement Map

Kansas in the 1860s was yet unmapped, as the first official county atlases did not appear until the 1880s. Yet it is possible to offer a modern reconstruction of the area in two counties, Marion and Morris, where several families settled over a period of about twenty years. To this frontier came members of families from different eastern and Midwestern towns.



### The Origin Towns

#### French Creek, West Virginia

The Loomis and Rude family story begins in French Creek, Upshur County, West Virginia. At the time, West Virginia was not yet a state and French Creek was still a part of Virginia. This split serves as a major factor into the migration of the Loomis and Rude families.

The people who came to start a life in French Creek were mainly emigrants from the New England region, many from Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup> This town was built beside the stream of water that shares the name, French Creek, which is a tributary of the Buckhannon River. Of the families who came, Alden, Barrett, Bosworth, Burr, Gould, Leonard, Loomis, Morgan, Phillips, Sexton, and Young were the earliest settlers to the area.<sup>2</sup> It is here where Jason Loomis, who will be discussed later, spent his childhood after his father, John Loomis Jr., decided to settle in French Creek, where he met and married Sophia Sexton. The people who settled there were mainly New England Presbyterians and had a log structure that served as the first church. Before, the people would gather at different houses before a set minister came to the town.<sup>3</sup>

At one point, during the 1820s, a problem began to arise with the land titles in the French Creek area. According to land speculators, the land belonged to them since they had received a grant from the King of England before the Revolutionary War. Fortunately for some of the residents, the State of Virginia was able to take the land from the speculators and sell it back to the farmers that had already settled.<sup>4</sup> John Loomis Jr., was able to settle his land claim and continued to farm in the French Creek area where he died unexpectedly in 1835. It was not until the time of the Civil War that the families living in French Creek had problems yet again with land titles. For some in the area, they had to buy land titles repeatedly, which led to frustration and the desire to start over in a new part of the United States.<sup>5</sup> It was before and during the Civil War that the Rudes left French Creek for Illinois; Jason Loomis's family left French Creek towards the end of the Civil War.<sup>6</sup> A large majority of these families settled in the towns of Assumption and Bone Gap, Illinois.

### Assumption and Bone Gap, Illinois

Assumption and Bone Gap were the Illinois prairie towns that drew the Loomis and Rude families from French Creek, West Virginia. The stay of these families in Illinois was short-lived, and there is little information known of their time in both towns. The early settlers of Barbara Booth's ancestors in Bone Gap were the Rude brothers. As of now, there is no information on their names, but they were two of the original settlers. Later, the Rude brothers were followed by the Gould family and then the Loomis families, although the Loomis family settled more prominently in Assumption. As mentioned earlier, many of these families likely left because of

---

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Booth, *Diamond of the Flint Hills*, (Salina, Kansas: Self-published, 1988), 74.

<sup>2</sup> Full names can be found in the following book: Lois M. Pinnell, *French Creek Presbyterian church: A memorial to the 150 years of service of the French Creek Presbyterian church*, (Parsons, West Virginia: McClain Printing Company, 1971), 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 108.



land ownership problems in West Virginia.<sup>7</sup> Since most of the members of the village came from the northeast part of the United States, Bone Gap was also referred to as Yankeetown. However, soon Jason and some other men, like the Rudes, were enticed to go to Kansas and seek land there thanks to pamphlets sent out to attract people to the new state.<sup>8</sup> The Homestead Act of 1862 also likely played a role in luring new settlers. Jason Loomis and many others made their forever home in Diamond Springs, Morris County, Kansas.

## Kansas Settlements

### Diamond Springs, Morris County

Today, sitting 16-18 miles southwest of Council Grove in Morris County, and a few miles south of where the original Santa Fe Trail passed, is the small, unincorporated town of Diamond Springs. When Jason Loomis and his other family members first set out to find a new home in Kansas, they followed the Santa Fe Trail southwest to Council Grove in Kansas and made camp for the night at a weigh station west of Council Grove.<sup>9</sup> After realizing how good the fresh water was at the weigh station, they made a decision to go further south to camp and eat. They

eventually came upon the little valley of Diamond Creek. With such a discovery, they decided that this was the place where they would start their new life and sent word back to the other families in Bone Gap about their findings.<sup>10</sup> Before they could have their wives and children come down, the men had to divide the land up and build houses for themselves. Luckily, there was an abandoned log cabin



Early photograph of the log cabin that Jason and his sons fixed up and stayed in. It was located by where the Diamond Springs sign stands today. Photograph from *Diamond of the Flint Hills*.

---

<sup>7</sup> Booth, 111.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 22.

near the spring of water, so the Loomis boys fixed it up and lived there until their new homes were built.



Photograph of Jason Loomis's barn in present day. The barn was added a few years after he had completed his house. Photograph by Brandon Williams, May 5, 2017.

Since Jason Loomis envisioned his family living in a stone house, his home was going to take a longer time to build. He eventually repaired the log cabin to be more livable so that his family could stay there until the stone house was completed.<sup>11</sup> Jason eventually chose to build his stone house on the east side of Diamond Creek by a spot where the creek had a lower stream crossing,

although he had been warned by Indians who still lived in the area that the creek might flood up to his home.<sup>12</sup> Below is a photograph of all that remains of Jason

Loomis' home today, but the magnificent stone walls still stand.

Once the families began to arrive, important buildings began to be erected too. One such building was the school. The Midwestern settlers were passionate about education, and they constructed the school while they were also building their homes. This school, called Bob Tail School, was built with two floors as it served many

different functions during the beginning of the community. Because education was of high importance to them, settlers



Photograph of Jason Loomis's 1866 stone house in Diamond Springs as it looks in present day. Jason chose a beautiful setting for his family home. Photograph by Brandon Williams, May 5, 2017.

<sup>11</sup> Booth.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 48.

hired the best teachers they could from Council Grove, the county seat.<sup>13</sup>

The next important building came at least a decade after the families settled in Diamond Springs. That was the Congregational Church. Before the church was erected, the people would gather at Bob Tail School house for services, each bringing a chair to serve as a pew.<sup>14</sup> These deacon chairs had traveled out from French Creek in covered wagons first to Illinois; one such chair is described later in this project. Once additional land had been settled and a pastor had accepted a call to serve as the minister of the new church, a true church building was finally constructed in 1884.



Early photograph of the Bob Tail School house. The first floor was used for the school while the second floor was used for neighborhood meetings. There also used to be church services held there before the church was built. Photograph from *Diamond of the Flint Hills*.



Early photograph facing south with the Congregational Church in the foreground and Bob Tail School in the background. Photograph from *Diamond of the Flint Hills*.

<sup>13</sup> Booth, 35.

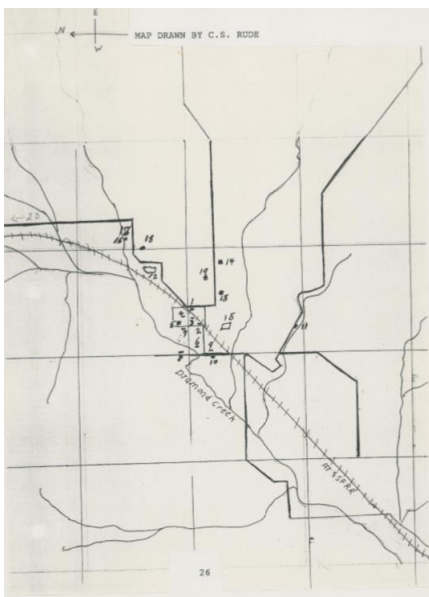
<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Bob Tail School house as church, 31. Chairs being used as pews, 34.



The final important building located in Diamond Springs was the railroad depot that ran through the town. The small community did not gain its name and incorporation until the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe railroad line was established in the community. The people originally wanted to name the town Loomisville, but instead gave it the name Diamond Springs after Jason declined the first name; George Morehouse, a state senator, wanted to call the depot and community Diamond Springs.<sup>15</sup> The depot was red and had a waiting room where tickets were bought. Later, it had some extra space renovated where the stationmaster, W.L. Rude lived with his wife and two children, including Mrs. Booth's mother, Lenora Rude Drayer. This depot brought on a population boom and led to other buildings springing up: the general store, blacksmith shop, and post office.<sup>16</sup> There were plans to bring in more rail lines to Diamond Valley, but those plans fell through after much opposition. Years passed and eventually the Santa Fe depot was moved, causing the town to lose population. Even though Diamond Springs would now be classified as a ghost town, it still has charm and beauty that express why Jason Loomis decided to build his new home and life there.



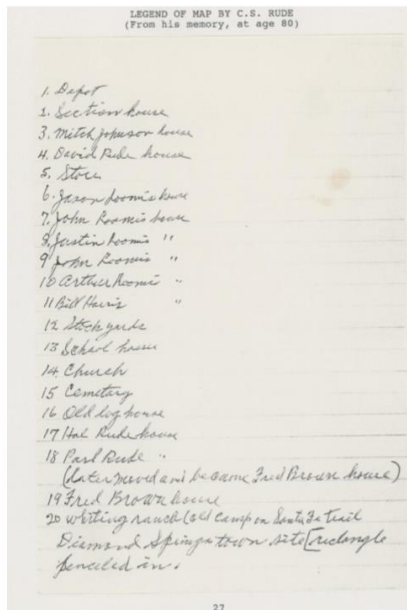
Early photograph of the Diamond Springs depot, which was said to be the color red. Notice how there is no platform for the people to get on and off trains easily. Photograph from *Diamond of the Flint Hills*.



C.S. Rude has left us a memory map of the town of Diamond Springs, with a handwritten legend; this is invaluable to researchers reconstructing the old town site.

Map of Diamond Springs drawn by C.S. Rude based on memory. Photograph from *Diamond of the Flint Hills*.

## Middle Creek, Marion County



Legend for the map on the previous page.  
Photograph from *Diamond of the Flint Hills*.

While a large focus has been on the Loomis and Rude

families, members of the Symes family were also important ancestors of Mrs. Booth. At first, it was difficult to pinpoint where Middle Creek was located. There was a misconception that it was a town that had faded away with time, but as the project went on, it was discovered that it was actually a farm on land owned by the Symes family, right on the banks of Middle Creek. This property and creek are in Marion County, Clear Creek Township. A plat map shows land shared by both Symes and Evans.<sup>17</sup> This land has been in the family for many years, as it was first bought by Thomas and George Symes in 1869 from the Santa Fe Railroad. The two first went out to

build their homes and prepare for when they could finally bring their families out to the farm. Around 1885, they were joined by yet another brother, John Symes, and his family. This Middle Creek farm has been in the family for almost 150 years and is still owned by a descendant of the Symes family.



Front view of the house at Middle Creek, Marion County in October, 1985. The house in this picture would be referred to as an I-house, as this type of house was often built by migrants from Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa. The Symes family came from Illinois. Photograph courtesy of Barbara Booth.

<sup>17</sup> *Atlas of Marion County, Kansas*, (Chicago: The Davy Map and Atlas Co., 1885), p. 25.



Side view of the barn on Middle Creek farm, Marion County, October, 1985. Notice how the barn is made up of two different materials: wood and limestone. According to the present owner, the stone foundations are still visible today on several out buildings. Also, notice the stone post resting in front of the trees. It is believed that this is an old hitching post. Photograph courtesy of Barbara Booth.



Photograph of the fertile bottom land that was eventually owned by John Symes, as it is today. Photograph by M.J. Morgan, June 14, 2017.



Photograph of present day Middle Creek taken from the northern end of the bridge that passes over it. Photograph by M. J. Morgan, June 14, 2017.

## Delevan, Morris County

Northwest of Diamond Springs once lay the small community of Delevan, founded first under the name Grandview in 1876. Ten years later, a Delevan, Illinois settler named Henry Kingman donated 80 acres of his land in order to attract a railroad station near his property.<sup>18</sup> The new town site flourished with the coming of the Missouri Pacific Railroad. Like Diamond Springs, it is today unincorporated, having lost its post office in 1992.<sup>19</sup> But Diamond Springs lies in a creek valley with tributaries and creeks watering the bottomlands. Delevan is not near any flowing water source. The surface of this part of Morris County was described in 1883 as “rolling prairie” and the extreme western part as “broken” with ridges and ravines.<sup>20</sup> This may have made farming more difficult, as rich bottomlands were lacking. The town plat maps for 1901 and 1923 show stockyards near the railway line; there may have been more stock raisers and shippers here.<sup>21</sup>

In 1901, directly north of Delevan lay two 160 acre sections belonging to the estate of J. Drayer.<sup>22</sup> By 1923, the atlas shows that Lester Drayer, Josiah Drayer’s son, was the owner of the two sections of land.<sup>23</sup> Lester Drayer was the father of Barbara Booth and the first Drayer child to be born in Delevan. Like Henry Kingman, the Drayers had come out from Illinois. The children walked south along dusty prairie roads to attend the Delevan town school, and the Drayer family men left a legacy of carpentry and skillful, handmade design. They were the latest of Mrs. Booth’s ancestors to arrive in Kansas, and like the Symes in Middle Creek, their history here is connected to the coming of a railroad. Their story is told through the artifacts they brought with them: a rocking chair made from old pieces of a covered wagon and a brilliantly-colored, woven coverlet.

---

<sup>18</sup> Melvin Bruntzel, “Delevan,” in *Quick Reference to Kansas*, Vol. 2 (Belleville: the Print Schop, 2010).

<sup>19</sup> “Kansas Post Office, 1828-1961.” Kansas State Historical Society, [kshs.org](http://kshs.org), accessed January 14, 2018.

<sup>20</sup> William G. Cutler, “Morris County” in *History of the State of Kansas* (A.T. Andreas Co., 1883).

<sup>21</sup> George A. Ogle & Co., *Standard Atlas of Morris County, Kansas* (Chicago, 1901).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> George A. Ogle, *Standard Atlas of Morris County, Kansas, 1923* (Chicago, 1923).



## The Artifacts and Their Stories

*“Artifacts tell us most when they are embedded in the rich texture of local history.”*

--Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth*, p.39.

### Deacon’s Chair



Photograph of the Deacon’s Chair from a bird’s eye view. The star shape on the seat and intricate design on the back are achieved by making perforated marks in the wood. Photograph by Brandon Williams, April 8, 2017.

### Wood Practices

This Deacon’s Chair has two distinct aspects: the bending of the walnut wood on the seat and back of the chair and the perforated holes marking the walnut part of the chair. This style of the bent walnut look is called bentwood. Bentwood is created through the process of steam bending, in which the wood is wetted down, bent to shape, and then left to harden. This was a technique that was invented and perfected by Michael Thonet. He was able to secure a patent in 1842 for the bentwood technique, which protected this process from being used by competitors for 27 years.<sup>24</sup> It is probable that bentwood furniture did not become popular in the United States until the 1850s. During the Great Exhibition in 1851, Thonet’s bentwood chairs gained worldwide recognition and began to sell internationally.<sup>25</sup> The aspect of perforation is defined

by the openings in the chair. These openings are usually a small or medium size, and they can either be arranged in perfect alignment or in ways that create a design, as in the case of this chair.

### The Deacon’s Role

Some churches provide a pulpit or lectern that is used as a platform to address the congregation. Other churches though have a special chair reserved for the leader of the service,

<sup>24</sup>Roslyn Beilly, “Antiques,” *Interior Design*, vol. 64, no.2, (1993), 70.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

which can take on many different forms. The particular chair in this study is called the Deacon's chair and its origins begin with the French Creek Presbyterian Church located in French Creek, Upshur County, West Virginia. Presbyterian churches are governed by a council of elders but there are times the council feels that the physical needs of the parishioners are being neglected. This is where the deacon comes in. The deacon is a person who will reach out or be there for a person when they are going through a tough time, and they are also there to help new members feel welcome into the parish. Sometimes, a deacon will have the job of leading the congregation during the service. Although the French Creek Presbyterian Church has used the title "minister" for the leader of the service the name of this chair has been passed down in Barbara Booth's family as the Deacon's Chair.

### Deacon's Chair Story

This chair has been with the family since at least the time that Jason Loomis lived in French Creek, West Virginia. When it came into his possession is unknown, but it could have been when a new church building was erected and the log church was broken apart, in 1851.<sup>26</sup> With the Loomis family, this chair was brought to Bone Gap, Edwards County, Illinois in 1863.<sup>27</sup> From there, Jason brought it along with him to Diamond Springs where it stayed in his house until the Congregational Church building was finally built, at which time Jason moved the chair into the church to be used by the minister. Family history states that the earliest settlers in Diamond Springs each brought a bentwood deacon's chair with them.



Photograph from the right of the Deacon's Chair. Notice how one arm has a carved wooden fringe on the underside while the other arm does not. Mrs. Booth speculates that these chairs may have been made this way to better sit side by side, creating a church pew look. This particular chair would have thus been at the end of a row. Photograph by Brandon Williams, April 8, 2017.

<sup>26</sup>Lois M. Pinnell, *French Creek Presbyterian Church: A memorial to the 150 years of service of the French Creek Presbyterian Church*, (Parsons, West Virginia: McClain Printing Company, 1971), 8

<sup>27</sup>Barbara Booth, *Diamond of the flint hills*, (Salina, Kansas: Self-published, 1988), 108.

## Peace and Plenty Coverlet



Photograph of the Peace and Plenty Coverlet laid out to its full length. Notice the fringe on the bottom of the coverlet, a hallmark of coverlets. Photo courtesy of Barbara Booth.

### Fabrics and Dyes

Coverlets are made by weaving linen, cotton, wool, or a combination of these fabrics together on a loom.<sup>28</sup> Most American coverlets were made from wool or cotton. In order to give the coverlets a colorful look, owners dyed the fabrics, especially if the coverlet was made out of wool, as that was the easiest fabric to dye. In the early nineteenth century, blue (made with indigo) and red (made with madder and cochineal) were the most common dyes used in coverlets.<sup>29</sup> There were other color choices such as yellow, tan, brown, black, and olive or teal, made by mixing two colors together.<sup>30</sup> In this coverlet, it is evident that indigo is one of the four dyes, and it appears that the red is dyed using madder. There are also smaller strips of teal, and the bird, tree, and medallion decorations are the off-white color of the original wool.

---

<sup>28</sup> Carol Strickler, *American woven coverlets* (Loveland, Colorado: Interweave Press, 1987), 26.

<sup>29</sup> John W. Heisey, *A checklist of American coverlet weavers* (Williamsburg, Virginia: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1978), 2.

<sup>30</sup> Strickler, 41.





Photograph of the Peace and Plenty Coverlet on the reverse side. Notice how the coverlet is mostly off-white and the medallions are indigo. Photo courtesy of Barbara Booth.

### Jacquard Beiderwand

This coverlet would be classified as a Jacquard Beiderwand. The characteristics that make this a Jacquard Beiderwand are seen in the way the sides are cinched with a ribbed line and that the coverlet is reversible with vertical lines.<sup>31</sup> In the middle of the 1820s, the Jacquard Loom made its first appearance in America and brought a huge change in the weaving world.<sup>32</sup> Before the Jacquard Loom, the typical patterns for coverlets were simple geometric patterns. With the introduction of the Jacquard Loom, professional weavers were able to make complex and picturesque patterns on the coverlets. The Jacquard Beiderwand coverlets also had a border running along the sides with pictures of



Peace and Plenty, 1849 marks the pattern design and year this coverlet was made. This is in one of two bottom corners of the coverlet. Photo courtesy of Barbara Booth.

<sup>31</sup> Heisey, 4.

<sup>32</sup> Strickler, 14.



birds, trees, vines, buildings, etc. They also had two corners on the bottom where a weaver would leave a trademark or “one or more pieces of information, such as the name of the weaver, the name of the customer, the place (city, county, township, state) or the year of manufacture.”<sup>33</sup> In the case of this coverlet, the name of the pattern design and date were used in the corner piece.

## Itinerant Weavers

Most, if not all, professional weavers wove the Jacquard Beiderwand coverlets after the loom’s development. Some of the professionals stayed in one location, while others, known as itinerant weavers, took their work on the road.<sup>34</sup> Generally, more males than females were weavers, but women would often prepare the fabric that was to be used to make the coverlets. In the case of itinerant weavers, these craftsmen “moved on foot or horseback, arrived in a settlement, used whatever loom was available there, and exchanged skill and labor for room and board or for merchandise.”<sup>35</sup>



Photograph of Henry Drayer. He owned the sheep whose wool was used to make the Peace and Plenty Coverlet. Photo courtesy of Barbara Booth.

## Peace and Plenty Coverlet Story

This coverlet has been in Barbara Booth’s family for generations. The Drayer family had the delight of hiring an itinerant weaver to weave a coverlet for them, although the story did not start as a happy one for Henry Drayer. Henry moved his family from Holland to Pennsylvania in the early 1800s, and in 1818, purchased land in Montgomery County, Ohio.<sup>36</sup> They owned many acres and farmed cattle and sheep. During one spring night in the late 1840s, a surprise late-winter snow swept through central Ohio. Henry awoke to a cold, white world, a drastic change from the day before. To his horror, he discovered that his sheep had been out in the meadow all night and had frozen to death.<sup>37</sup> Now with no way to make money from the sheep, Henry and four of his daughters, Elizabeth, Maria, Amanda, and Emily, struck a deal: if the girls sheared the sheep, they could

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>34</sup> Strickler, 19.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>36</sup> Lenora Drayer, *Handy Mandy and more*, (originally privately printed in 1936), 14.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 15.

keep all of the wool.<sup>38</sup> The girls then sheared the sheep, an immense amount of hand labor performed on dead animals, and, in order to make yarn, they had to clean, brush, card, spin, and dye the wool.<sup>39</sup> After completing all of the necessary steps, the girls finally settled on using the yarn for a coverlet. They were too far away from Philadelphia's commercial weaver's guild, so they had to wait for an itinerant weaver to pass through the area. One did eventually come and was able to weave the "dead sheep yarn" into broad patterned strips, which the girls then sewed together, making three coverlets.<sup>40</sup> In the end, after all of the girls' hard work, the coverlets were passed down to Henry Drayer's sons, since they would carry on the Drayer family name. This unfair reality is one of the points Mrs. Booth stresses in her oral history. One other aspect that makes the Peace and Plenty Coverlet unique, is that when Lester Drayer's little sister, Gertie, was sick, confined to bed, she braided part of the fringe on the coverlet, still there to this day.<sup>41</sup>

Gertie Drayer died of the fever that kept her in bed, under the coverlet. Hers was the first death in the settlement of Delevan. This gives the braiding of the coverlet fringe a deeper meaning. The Drayer men, Josiah and his son Lester, practiced woodworkers, built the first coffins in Delevan, and the very first coffin was for their own small sister.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Barbara Booth, *The Golden Thread* (unpublished manuscript, used by permission of author).

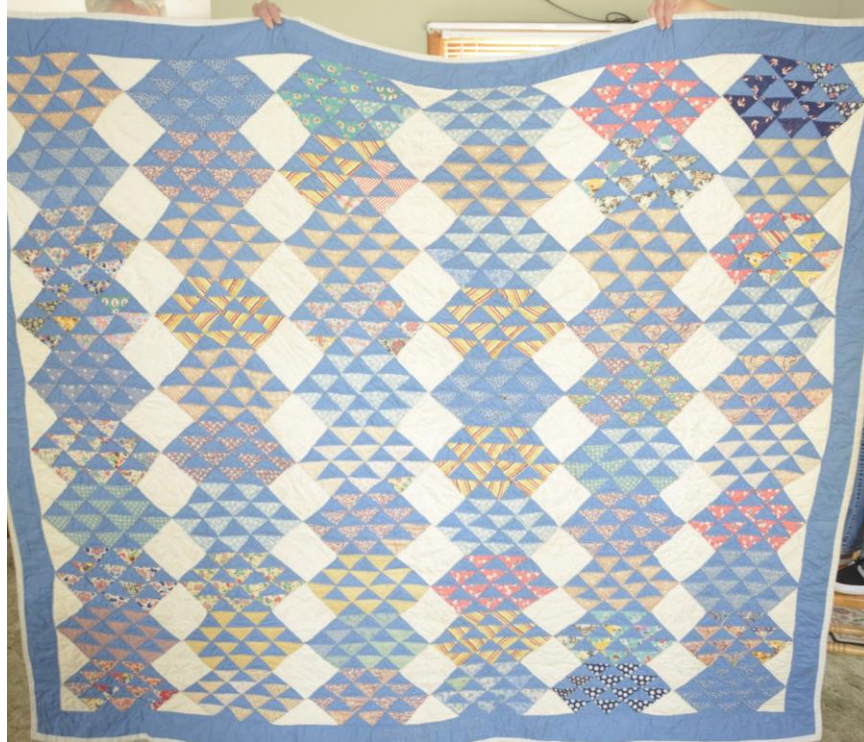
<sup>39</sup> Lenora Drayer, 16.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Mrs. Barbara Booth, December 12, 2017, Clay Center, Kansas.

## Flying Geese Quilt



The Flying Geese Quilt as it looks today. Notice how each hexagon looks the same in shape but has uses a multitude of colorful fabrics running throughout. Photograph by Brandon Williams, April 8,

### What Makes It a Flying Geese Quilt

The official name of this quilt pattern is Flying Geese. While there are variations for the Flying Geese quilt pattern, there are distinct features that differentiate the variations from other quilt patterns. The first common feature is the small triangular piece used throughout the quilt. The second feature is the required fabrics used for the triangular pieces. There is the noticeable blue color that runs throughout the quilt, the white fabric in between, and then other complementary colors for the other triangles. The blue fabric stands for the sky that the geese are flying through, while the white fabric appears to symbolize the clouds throughout the sky.<sup>43</sup> Usually, in Flying Geese quilts, two different blues are used to symbolize the sky and the geese; since different colored fabrics are used throughout the quilt to symbolize the geese, this quilt is also a Scrap Basket Quilt.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Barbara Booth. Interview by Rachel Hein, April 8, 2017.

<sup>44</sup> See a good description of the Flying Geese quilt design in Roderick Kiracofe and Mary Elizabeth Johnson, *The American Quilt: A History of Cloth and Comfort* (Potter Style Books, 2004).

## Scrap Basket Quilt

A Scrap Basket quilt describes the re-cycled fabrics used to make up the quilt top. Notice in the picture at the beginning how there are many carefully chosen fabric colors and designs mixed in the quilt. Each fabric was probably once used to make shirts, aprons, and dresses. The worn clothes were thrown into a basket, to be ripped apart and used at a later time. Most of these fabrics are cotton-based, since cotton was the most inexpensive and washable cloth in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>45</sup> It appears that the fabrics used in this quilt are cotton calico prints and gingham (tiny checks).



LEFT: Notice how in this hexagon there are two different fabric patterns used, which further proves that this quilt is a Scrap Basket Quilt. Photograph by Brandon Williams, April 8, 2017.

RIGHT: Notice how in this hexagonal shape, the fabrics symbolizing the geese are in a 2-3-4-3 pattern and are all facing the same way, which can be seen in throughout the whole quilt. Photograph by Brandon Williams, April 8, 2017.



## Ruth's Story

This quilt was made by an amazing family seamstress named Ruth. At the age of 100, Ruth created three quilt tops, including this one, one for each of Lenora Drayer's children.<sup>46</sup> These tops were later quilted onto backings by Barbara Booth and Lenora Drayer, Mrs. Booth's mother. Ruth was an experienced and talented seamstress; this can be seen by the stitch work in the close-up pictures above. Each stitch is the same length and size, and they are so miniscule that it is hard to notice them at first glance, the mark of a skilled seamstress. If one were to look at the quilt from a slight distance, she would also be amazed by how each section of the quilt is proportionate to the pieces surrounding it. This skill is further shown by how each piece is in perfect alignment and there are no noticeable mistakes or pieces of fabric out of line.

Ruth, 100 at the time she stitched this quilt top together, had been expertly sewing her whole life and once worked at a shirt factory in the garment district of Chicago.<sup>47</sup> Using a skill she had

<sup>45</sup> Information cotton fabrics from Barbara Booth.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.



developed over years, she moved to Chicago with her young son, Charlie, to begin work in the garment district.

This was not easy work in the mid-1800s. Women were still sewing clothes for by hand, so this meant that only the best, most skilled seamstresses were hired. Despite this, wages were low for seamstresses. A dramatic family story surrounds Ruth's time in Chicago. While living there, Ruth walked her son to a city school and then headed over to work at the shirt factory.

However, on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1871, at the age of 36, Ruth experienced a day different from all the others. On that fateful morning after she picked up her sewing from the previous day, a great calamity arose outside. A raging wall of fire made its way across the city of Chicago, heading right towards the garment district where Ruth was carefully working on her stitches.



Photograph of Ruth on her 104<sup>th</sup> birthday. Notice how she has a cast on her leg, which she broke one cold morning. She was able to walk once again, although with the help of a cane. Photo courtesy of Barbara Booth.

Much like the businessmen who made sure to get their families to safety first, Ruth must have instantly thought of her son and rushed away to find him and take him to a safe area.<sup>48</sup> Perhaps before Ruth got to Charlie, she made a plan with the other seamstresses to meet in a location that would protect them from the fire. Knowing that water could save them, the ladies must have run to the closest source of water, the Chicago River that flowed through the garment district. Family accounts say that Ruth and others took shelter under a stone bridge, most likely standing in the water itself, to shield themselves from the fire and the blistering heat. Many others in Chicago also “stood neck deep in the icy water to protect themselves from the flames and the intense heat”, as that was probably the only way to survive.<sup>49</sup> Luckily, Ruth and her son made it out alive, and

years later she moved to the Middle Creek farm with John and Wealthy Ann Symes, Ruth's stepdaughter. Ruth stayed at Middle Creek until she passed away after reaching the age of 105, although one would never have guessed she was that age, especially since she was still as mobile and sharp as ever. Even a broken leg when she was 104 did not much slow her down!

<sup>48</sup> John J. Pauly, “The great Chicago fire as a national event,” *American Quarterly* 36:5, (1984), 4.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

## Covered Wagon Rocking Chair

### The Conestoga Wagon

During the time of the Santa Fe Trail, 1824 – 1880, the only way that people could travel the distance to Santa Fe, New Mexico, for trade was by using a covered freighting wagon. Covered wagons were pulled by a team of mules, oxen, or horses, with oxen preferred. There were also places along the way where settlers could stop to restock supplies, animals, or wagons. The Last Chance Store in Council Grove, Kansas, is an excellent example of such a stopping point. New supplies were often necessary before making the long trek through the Kansas western prairies. Independence, Missouri, was also an important point for people to switch out animals and repair or replace wagons for ones that were better equipped for travel through Kansas. This lighter wagon was referred to as the Santa Fe Wagon and was redesigned from the Pennsylvania Conestoga Wagon that was originally much larger and heavier. Other significant differences of the Santa Fe Conestoga Wagon are as follows: it “did not have the famous curved or down-bowed body of the Conestoga; its bottom and top were straight...it does technically have a raved body, [but] it is a very simplified raved body...[however], the Santa Fe wagon did retain the outward-canted end-gates, front and back.”<sup>50</sup>

### Osage Orange and White Oak

Two important woods that were used in parts of the wagon were Osage orange and white oak. These two woods were usually used to make the rims, hubs, spokes, and felloes of the wagon wheel. The wheels of the wagon were one of the more important pieces, since they made the wagon roll. It was essential that the wheels were made from woods that could withstand the bumpy path. Osage orange is a tough wood, known for its firmness and its ability to keep a good shape even after being soaked with water.<sup>51</sup> The Osage orange is somewhat flexible too, and its branches were frequently used by the Indians to make bows.<sup>52</sup> The white oak is known as a hardy and tough tree. It is the most rot-resistant of all the oaks. It is possible that the white oak wood was used for other parts of the wagon, since the wagons were built to be strong and stay together.

### Covered Wagon Rocking Chair Story

The Covered Wagon Rocking Chair began its life as part of a covered wagon that brought some members of the Drayer family to Illinois from their Ohio farm. The rocking chair was likely made by Henry Drayer in Illinois from the old wagon, as nothing was wasted on early farms. Later it traveled to Kansas with the Peace and Plenty Coverlet, carrying important family stories with it. Upon their arrival in Illinois, the family decided to convert the covered wagon into an open

---

<sup>50</sup> Mark L. Gardner, *Wagons on the Santa Fe Trail 1822-1880*, (National Park Service Department of the Interior, 1997), 41.

<sup>51</sup> Jim W. Grace, “The enduring Osage Orange,” *Missouri Conservationist Magazine*, November 2, 1995.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

wagon to be used around the farm.<sup>53</sup> With the wooden frame that made up the canvas-covered arching frame of the wagon, Henry had the idea to construct a chair. He probably took the curving wood that made up the bow of the frame to make the rocker legs, arms, and frame. A skilled craftsman who passed this talent to his son Josiah, Henry created a beautiful rocking chair that is still used in the family generations later in Kansas. It began life as a Conestoga wagon in pre-Civil War Ohio.<sup>54</sup>



This is the rocking chair made from parts of the covered wagon that brought the Drayer family to Illinois. It then traveled with them to Delevan, Kansas. Notice how the arms and legs have a similar bowed shape, which shows they were probably from the same parts of the wagon. Photograph courtesy of Barbara Booth.

---

<sup>53</sup> Barbara Booth, e-mail message to author, May 18, 2017.

<sup>54</sup> Barbara Booth, interview by M.J. Morgan, December 12, 2017, Clay Center, Kansas.

## Father's Loom



Photograph of the back of the Father's Loom. Notice how much detail went into the creation of the loom in the careful placement of each heddle (a heddle is the fine wire or looped cord with an eye; the warp needle passes through these eyes during the weaving process). Photograph by Brandon Williams.

### Type of Loom

The loom shown above was built by Lester Drayer for his wife to use in their home. It has a similar look to that of a four-harness jack floor loom, which could be the model it was built from. Today a loom like this would cost over \$3,000.<sup>55</sup> Mr. Drayer used maple and walnut in this loom, long-lasting and beautiful hardwoods. Maple was used to create the inlay of the loom, while the main structure was built with walnut.<sup>56</sup> This can easily be seen in the picture below of the incremented ruler attached to the loom. The increments are marked by inch using the lighter colored maple against the darker walnut. A loom this size is very difficult and time-consuming to construct, as there are many different parts and small pieces that come together to complete the loom, and it must move smoothly. According to Mrs. Booth, her father built the loom "from memory." He had no paper plans and designed the entire loom himself.

---

<sup>55</sup> See a four-harness jack floor loom at The Woolery online guide, <https://woolery.com/weaving-looms/looms-by-types/floor-looms.html>. Accessed February 22, 2018.

<sup>56</sup> Barbara Booth, interview by Rachel Hein, Clay Center, Kansas, April 8, 2017.





Photograph of the increments. Notice the precision and contrasting colored inlays made of maple and walnut wood. Photograph by Brandon Williams, April 8, 2017.



Notice how the shaft frame lifts up to make it easier for the person weaving. Photograph by Brandon Williams, April 8, 2017.

## Story of the Father's Loom

Weaving is a technique that has been passed down for generations to both men and women in Barbara Booth's family. It was a skill that Mrs. Booth's father, Lester Drayer, and mother, Lenora Rude Drayer, learned from their parents. The craftsmanship necessary to build a large wooden floor loom came from Lester Drayer's father, Josiah, and from Henry Drayer before him. As a young boy, Lester had helped Josiah build the first coffins in frontier Delevan. From great-grandfather to grandfather to father, weaving and woodworking – coverlets and furniture – were creative skills passed down the Drayer line. In addition, Lenora Rude Drayer's mother, Mollie Loomis Rude, used a folding loom that had come out in a covered wagon from Illinois in the 1860s. The loom may have actually been built in French Creek, West Virginia. Mollie's sister Martha became known in Diamond Springs for her rugs, woven on this folding loom from

threads and rags of old cloth. So when Lester Drayer and Lenora Rude married, they each brought with them a family history of craftsmanship and weaving.<sup>57</sup>

After Lester and Lenora graduated college, Lester began working at Kansas State Agricultural College, now Kansas State University, and they both became active participants in a weaver's guild located in Manhattan, Kansas.<sup>58</sup> Weaving had been in Lester's family for many generations and his father obviously passed this skill on to Lester. During the time when the Drayers were a part of the Manhattan Weaver's Guild, Lester built a heavy floor loom for Lenora to use at home.<sup>59</sup> With this loom, the family created an array of fabrics to be used in different projects, including a wool suit for Mrs. Booth's sister. Eventually, Mrs. Booth inherited the loom and she still has it in her home to this day.



This vest was part of a wool suit made for Mrs. Booth's sister. All of the fabric was woven on the Father's Loom and then sewn together.  
Photograph by Brandon Williams, April 8, 2017.

## Conclusion

When this researcher looks back on her project a year after the start of research, she feels a sense of amazement by how much history can be discovered from one artifact. Through challenges and breakthroughs, the many threads of stories and histories behind families, towns, and artifacts were finally woven together to create a material culture study, showcasing the incredible craftsmanship passed down from generation to generation within a single family.

---

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Barbara Booth by M.J. Morgan, February 7, 2018, Clay Center, Kansas.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Barbara Booth by Rachel Hein, Clay Center, Kansas, April 8, 2017.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

## Photographs of Diamond Springs



Photograph of Jason Loomis's stone house in 1988. There are some signs of decay on the roof of the house. Photograph courtesy of Barbara Booth.



Photograph of the inside of the stone house in 1988. The signs of decay are more prominent from this view of wooden pieces that fell to the floor. Photograph courtesy of Barbara Booth.





Photograph of Jason Loomis's 1866 stone house in Diamond Springs as it looks in present day. Jason chose a beautiful setting for his family home. Photograph by Brandon Williams, May 5, 2017.



A cornerstone on Jason Loomis's stone house. In the bottom left corner there appear to be markings that are possibly the name Jason Loomis and the date 1866. Photograph by Brandon Williams, May 5, 2017.

## Bibliography

- Atlas of Marion County, Kansas*. Chicago: The Davy Map and Atlas Co., 1885.
- Beilly, Roslyn. "Antiques." *Interior Design* vol. 64, no. 2, 1993.
- Booth, Barbara. *Diamond of the Flint Hills*. Salina, Kansas: Self-published, 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Email message to author, May 18, 2017.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Interview by Rachel Hein, April 8, 2017, Clay Center, Kansas.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Interview by M.J. Morgan, December 12, 2017. Clay Center, Kansas.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Interview by M.J. Morgan, February 7, 2018, Clay Center, Kansas.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The golden thread*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Bruntzel, Melvin. *Quick Reference to Kansas, Vol. 2*. Belleville: The Print Schop, 2010.
- Cutler, William G. *History of the State of Kansas*. Chicago: A.T. Andreas Co., 1883.
- Drayer, Lenora. *Handy Mandy and more*. Originally self-published in 1936.
- Gardner, Mark L. *Wagons on the Santa Fe Trail 1822-1880*. National Park Service Department of the Interior, 1997.
- Grace, Jim W. "The enduring Osage Orange." *Missouri Conservationist Magazine*, November 2, 1995.
- Heisey, John W. *A checklist of American coverlet weavers*. Williamsburg, Virginia: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1978.
- Kiracofe, Roderick and Mary Elizabeth Johnson. *The American Quilt: A History of Clothing and Comfort, 1750-1950*. Potter Style Books, 2004.
- Ogle, George A. *Standard Atlas of Morris County, Kansas, 1901*. Chicago, 1901.
- Ogle, George A. *Standard Atlas of Morris County, Kansas, 1923*. Chicago, 1923.
- Pauly, John J. "The great Chicago fire as a national event." *American Quarterly* 36:5, 1984.
- Pinnell, Lois M. *French Creek Presbyterian Church: A memorial to the 150 years of service of the French Creek Presbyterian Church*. Parsons, West Virginia: McClain Printing Company, 1971.
- Strickler, Carol. *American woven coverlets*. Loveland, Colorado: Interweave Press, 1987.



Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher. *The Age of homespun: objects and stories in the creation of an American myth*. New York: Vintage Books, 2001.

The Woolery Online Guide to Looms. <https://woolery.com/weaving-loom/looms-by-types/floor-loom.html>. Accessed February 22, 2018.