

## Peabody Historical Society 2017 Miniature Quilt Challenge

### “Inspired by Time: Women of Peabody”

#### Peabody Historical Society Challenge Selections

## Elizabeth Whitman, 1752-1788



Engraving, James Eddy, from  
“The Elizabeth Whitman  
Mystery,” Charles K. Bolton, a  
publication of the Peabody  
Historical Society, 1911.

Elizabeth Whitman's mysterious life story may not have been preserved by time, had a female author not penned a best-selling novel, based on her life. Born in 1752, Whitman was the daughter of a Connecticut minister and his wife. Well-educated, and widely admired for her poetry and music, the young Elizabeth had many suitors. Whitman was engaged to be married twice, but ultimately took part in a secret affair which left her pregnant.

Whitman chronicled her life in letters to friends, in which she referred to her lover only as “Fidelio.” Whitman traveled to Peabody and took up residence in the Bell Tavern in 1788, under the assumed name “Mrs. Walker” and stated that her husband would be joining her in time. No husband or lover came for Elizabeth, and she died on July 25<sup>th</sup>, after having given birth to a stillborn child.

Her real name remained a mystery, and town residents took it upon themselves to determine her true identity and provide her with a respectable burial. After her story was published in the local paper, along with a list of her belongings, she was identified. Elizabeth Whitman's place in history was cemented in the realm of fiction, when author Hannah Webster Foster fictionalized her tale in the work “The Coquette or, The History of Eliza Wharton.” Foster wrote the best-selling novel, changing Whitman's name to Eliza Wharton, and telling her story in the manner of a cautionary tale to young women about the dangers of following your heart.

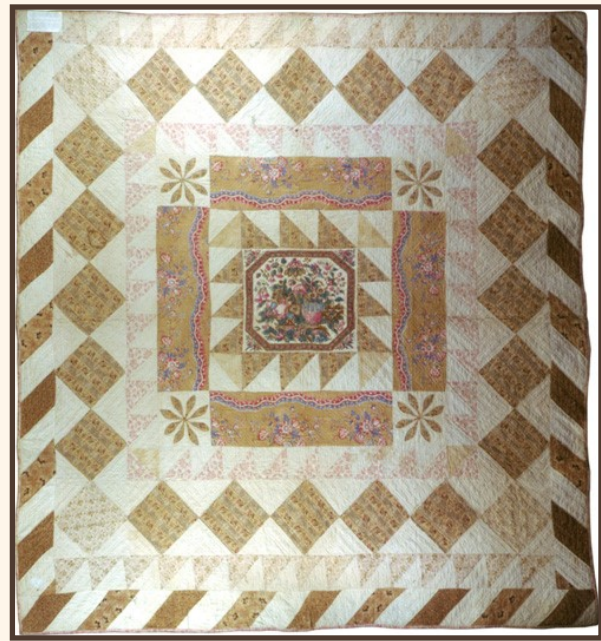


Quilt, Pre-1799.

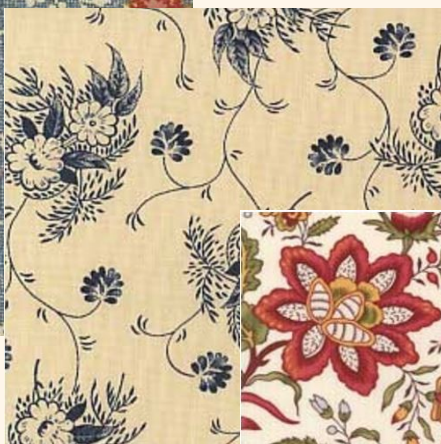
Applique of cut-out  
chintz.



Quilt, 1770s. Collection of Michigan State University.



Quilt, 1800s. Collection of Michigan State University.



Inspiration Fabric Swatches

# Martha Osborne Barrett, 1827-1905

As a lifelong poet and diarist, Martha Osborne Barrett used her writing to interpret the changing world around her. Born in 1827, in South Danvers (now Peabody), into a financially strapped family, Barrett left home to attend school and be trained as a teacher. A passionate observer of her community, Barrett used her writing to document both the minute details of her life, as well as politics and national events. She was a staunch abolitionist, and expressed her views in poems such as "Appeal to New England Women, written after Reading Uncle Tom's Cabin."



Barrett found that the stresses of life, including teaching, weighed on her heavily, and she tried out various forms of employment before settling on a millinery shop in Salem. Barrett was most happy when writing, reading, and supporting social causes, and resented the fact that she could not spend all her time engaged in these activities. As an unmarried woman in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and a part of the working class, Barrett longed for a life in which she could use her talents as a writer to support herself. "Work, hard and almost unremitting, has made me necessarily very negligent of my pen... Some pursuit other than what I am at present engaged would be more congenial to my taste—but mere taste can not always be consulted. It is absolutely necessary for me to do something to earn money and this work seems to be the most available just now. So I am steadily at work." Barrett Diary, 1855.

Martha Osborne Barrett dressed in costume for a party in 1890, from the collection of the Peabody Historical Society.

Quilt, 1880s.

Arizona Quilt Documentation Project.

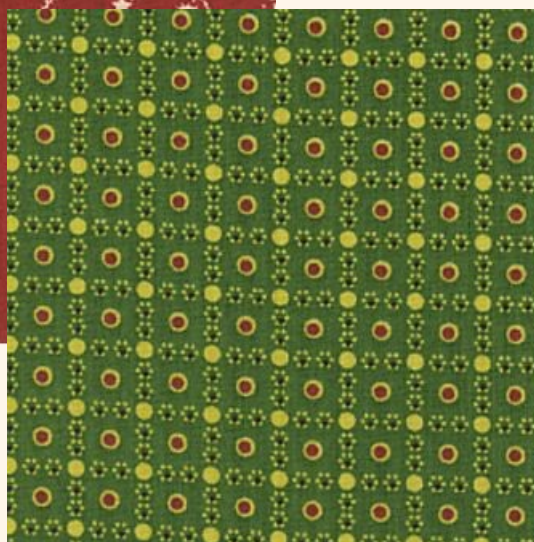
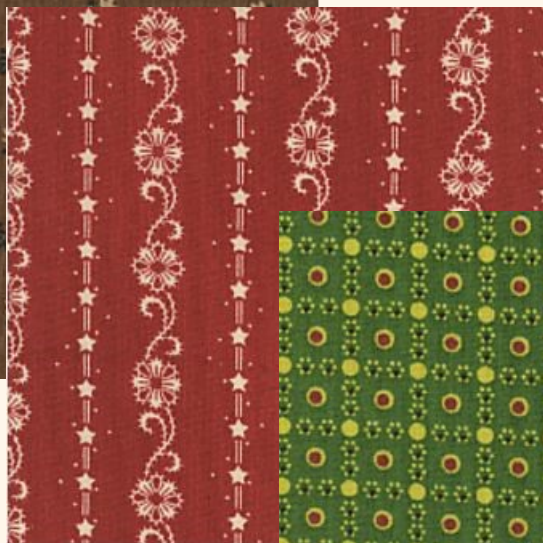




Quilt, 1890. Arizona Quilt Documentation Project.



Quilt, 1850-1875.  
Rose Wreath, Arizona Quilt Documentation Project.



Inspiration Fabric Swatches

# Mary Ophelia Stevens, 1842-1928

From young adulthood, Mary Ophelia Stevens championed social causes that she believed in fervently. Born in 1842, Mary was a young woman by the time the Civil War began, and she traveled to Washington, D.C. to work at the Seminary Hospital, the primary source for the care of soldiers wounded on the battlefield. By 1866, Stevens was working with Clara Barton at the newly created Columbia Hospital for Women.



In 1868, Mary married Quartermaster Daniel Stevens, who had received the Medal of Honor for his bravery in the Second Battle of Fort Fisher. The couple moved to Peabody, and Mary began her tireless efforts to fight for women's right to vote. Mary helped to found the Peabody Suffrage Club and petitioned Congress repeatedly, for suffrage. Mary also petitioned Congress to grant her husband the Congressional Medal of Honor, and saw that dream realized in 1916. Women finally gained the right to vote and Stevens, at age 78, registered to vote in a national election at City

Mary Ophelia Stevens from the Hall on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1920.  
*Peabody Enterprise*, Sept. 18th, 1920.



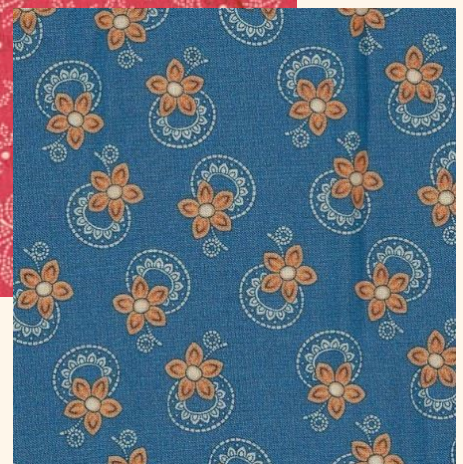
Quilt, 1876-1900. Arizona Quilt Documentation Project.



Quilt, Grandma's Flower Garden  
1889. Arizona Quilt Documentation  
Project.



Quilt, 1890. Arizona Quilt  
Documentation Project.



Inspiration Fabric Swatches

## Bessie Buxton, 1877-1955



Bessie Buxton, around 1907-1915, Collection of the Peabody Historical Society.

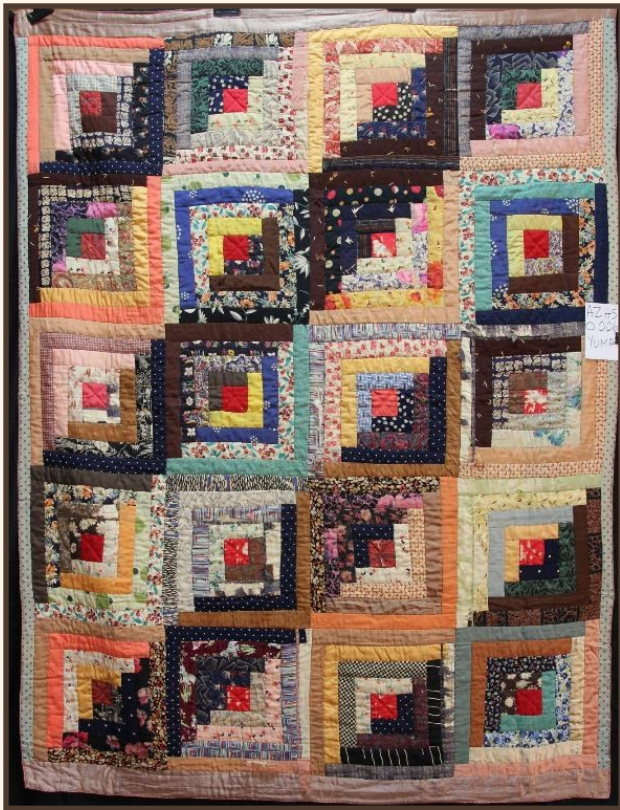
Bessie Raymond Buxton dedicated her life to improving and preserving the beauty that she in saw both in nature, and her community. Raised by her Aunt, on Lowell St., Buxton was brought up in Peabody schools in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and grew concerned as she saw her home become increasingly industrialized by the leather factories that dominated the local landscape.

After her marriage, in 1896 to Henry H. Buxton, Bessie founded the Peabody Garden Club to push for the beautification of Peabody. During her time with the Garden Club (which is still in existence today) Buxton published a Glossary of 10,000 Species of Begonias. As a member of the Historical Society, Buxton wrote the History of the South Church, and also served as the President of the Peabody Women's Club.

Bessie's preservation mindset led her to collect sea chanteys (songs sung by sailors during physical labor) while traveling in Europe, and she gave public programs that told the stories of sea captains and their songs. During WWII, Buxton and her husband donated land from their estate to the Peabody Victory Gardens. Buxton was a woman of many passions, and she used her zeal for culture to make Peabody a more beautiful and rich place to live.



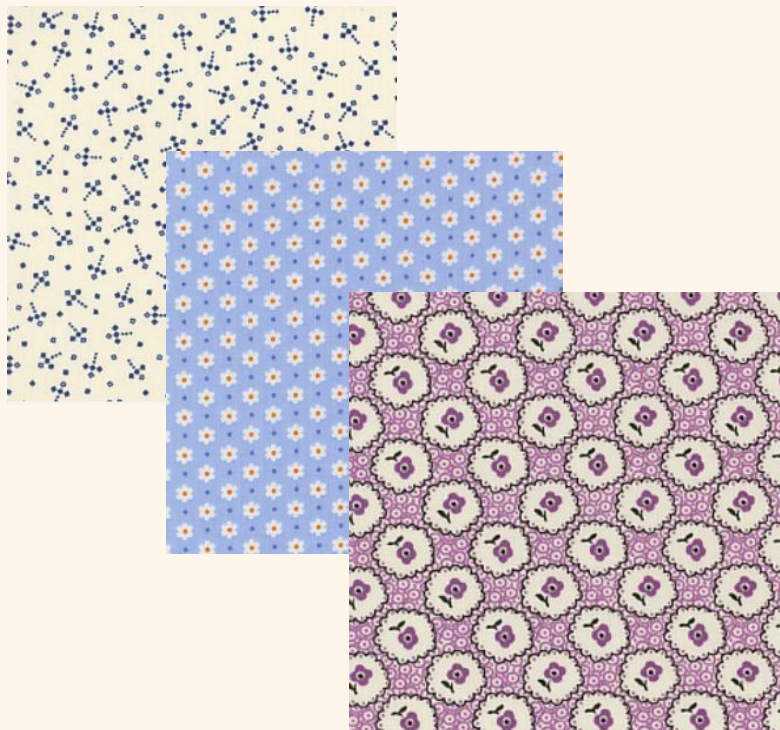
Grandmother's Fan Quilt, 1917.  
Arizona Quilt Documentation  
Project.



Log Cabin Quilt, 1901-1929.  
Arizona Quilt Documentation  
Project.



Sunbonnet Sue Quilt, 1901-1929.  
Arizona Quilt Documentation  
Project.



Inspiration Fabric Swatches