

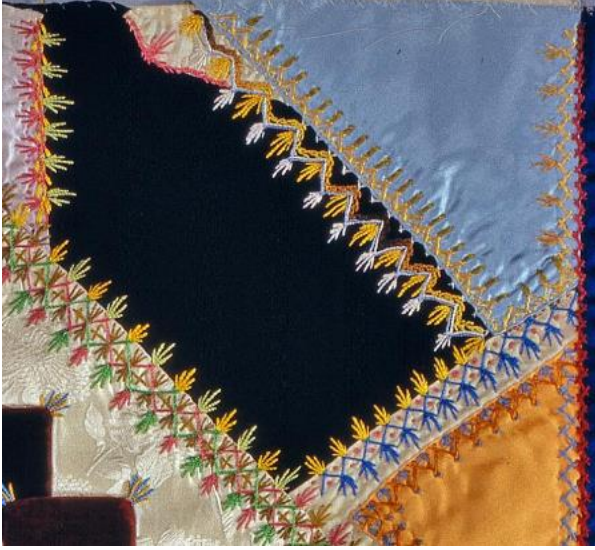


## **Crazy Quilts**

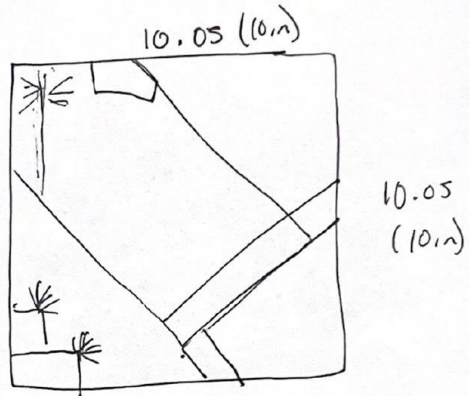
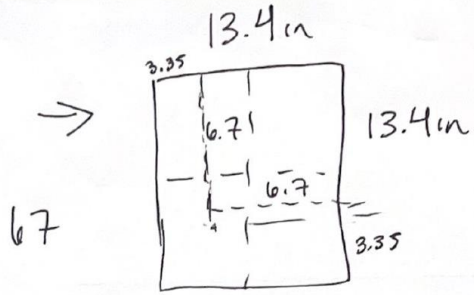
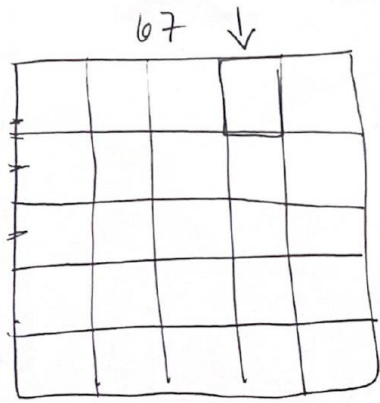
In the late 1800s, Crazy Quilts grew in popularity and became the first needlework craze in America. Patterns, kits, and silk scraps were widely sold for women to create their own patchwork textiles. These quilts are known for their beautiful, yet irregular shaped pieces of fabric and embellished with embroidery to create one-of-a-kind luxurious quilts, lined with cotton or silk. You would often find these embellished treasures in parlors or delicately placed on piano benches. Mainly used for decoration, the Crazy Quilt sensation gave way to utilitarian quilts that became popular in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Crazy Quilts were a craze that swept the nation, and their beauty is still appreciated today.

Crazy Quilts are typically created from blocks using the foundation method. These blocks are made from odd-shaped fabric pieces, often utilizing scraps. Silks and satins were regularly used, elevating the overall quilt feel and appearance. Each piece of fabric is hand-stitched on to a backing piece of fabric, often cotton or muslin, one at a time. After the first piece of fabric is stitched to the backing fabric, the second piece is placed, right sides together, and one edge is stitched down overlapping (and ultimately hiding) the seam of the first piece. It is then ironed flat, and the same method is repeated until the block is complete. These quilts are meticulously embellished with cotton or silk embroidery thread, using a variety of stitches. Ornate and whimsical embroidery stitches adorn the edges of the patchwork to cover seams. Often, you'll find intricate motifs, poems, and dates or initials stitched throughout the fabric of the quilt, not just along the edges. The blocks are sewn together to finish the quilt top, and more embroidery is added to these seams before the backing is added. There is no such thing as "over embellished" when it comes to Crazy Quilts. The possibilities for these stunning quilts are endless and there is no question why they spiked in popularity.

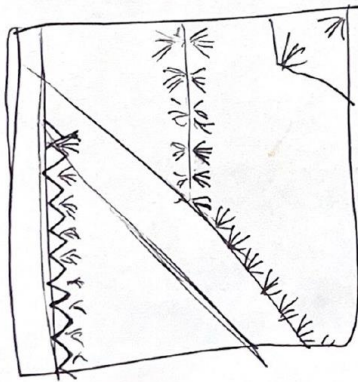




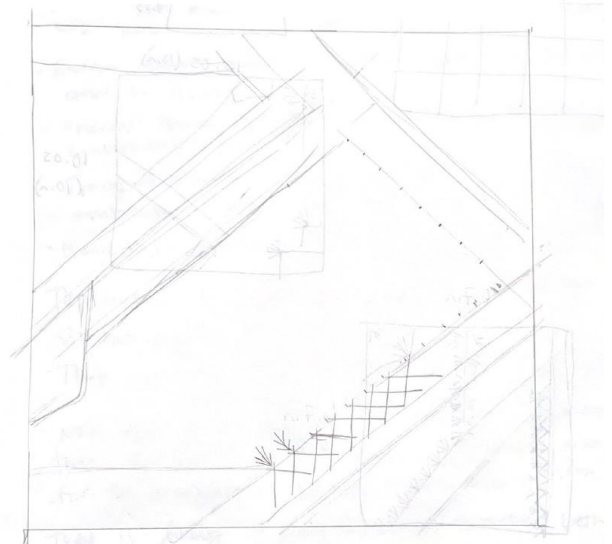
Textile study



6.7in 6 3/4in



6.7in  
6 3/4in



Aimee Elkington Hodge

1877-1946

67 in x 67 in

Fabric: silk, satin, taffeta, velvet, ribbon

Thread: silk, cotton, chenille, metallic cord

Aimee Elkington was twelve when she first embroidered a ribbon for this decorative parlor throw in 1877. It was the beginning of the popularity of “crazy quilts,” decorative tops that were pieced of irregularly shaped bits of silk fabrics, elaborately embroidered, and lined with a silk or cotton fabric. While some may have been used as bedcovers, more often they were displayed in the parlor.

Merchants sold packages of fabric samples, instructions for assembling them, and embroidery patterns to add an endless variety of designs and ornamental stitches. Often the throws were individualized by incorporating mementoes such as campaign ribbons, embroidered or printed poems, and significant phrases, dates or initials. Aimee employed many of the popular motifs and techniques on her throw.

The parlor throw is composed of twenty-five crazy-patched and embroidered blocks. In 1946, almost seventy years after she first started, Aimee joined the blocks together. She died shortly after, before she could add a planned border and lining. Among the motifs are fans, cattails, sunflowers, spider webs, and hearts, all frequently found on other parlor throws. Flowers were not only embroidered but also made of puckered and tacked velvet, padded silk pile, or silk floss that was tacked down and sheared. Applique, crazy patchwork, hand-painting, and fancy embroidery stitches were used to create the elaborate top.

The embroidered initials “AE” in the center signify Aimee Elkington. Some of the blocks may have memorialized friends, such as the crane motif, said to be included for a friend named Crane. A poem, “Easter” by William Crosswell, printed on one silk patch, may have had special significance for Aimee. The silk, satin, and velvet fabrics are typical of the period, as are the many colors of silk embroidery thread, chenille, and metallic cord used to embellish them. Created over a lifetime, it is in the rendition that Aimee created a unique and very personal object.

Aimee Elkington was born in Toledo, Ohio, in 1865. She married a Mr. Shepherd, and the couple's daughter, Glaydes, was born in Florida about 1890. On the 1900 census, Aimee was widowed, she and young daughter were living with her mother, Elizabeth Elkington Power, and stepfather, Samuel Power, in Eustis, Lake County, Fla. By 1910 Aimee had remarried, to John L. Hodge, and was living in Lucas, Ohio. As a young child in 1868, John had moved from Canada to the United States. Aimee died in 1946. Glaydes, Aimee's daughter, donated the quilt (parlor throw) in 1970 and was “delighted to have [my mother's quilt] in an interesting and wonderful place.”

## **Bibliography**

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