



The Great Depression forced families to return to earlier pioneer values of thrift and self-reliance. Women recycled grain and feed bags into clothing, towels, pillow cases, curtains, tablecloths, and quilts. This practice was so prevalent that Bag companies, competing for women's business, replaced plain bags with attractive printed sacks. Bags were traded among women at "bag parties" where a premium was placed on bags from distant towns. Even the smallest fragments from cut bags were saved.

Fig. 110

Sugar, flour, and grain sacks, c. 1935.

"For a while I pieced on the halves for people around. Some folks were doing better than us and they would get together enough material for two quilts. I would piece both of them and for my work would get to keep one for nothing." 33



Fig. 113

Girl with applique quilt block, c. 1932.  
 "During the Depression...I learned to make string quilts pieced on newspaper when I was 11 or 12 years old. We'd use odds 'n ends—scraps from making clothes, fertilizer sacks, sugar sacks, feed sacks, anything."—Georgia Swanner's mother 34



Animal feed sack.  
 The manufacturers expected women to re-use these bags; washing directions are printed on them  
 Fig. 111

"During the depression...the feed sacks were made of printed cottons and many's the time I've gone over a load of feed down at the store trying to match up a color to one of them prints." 35

Quilt patch, "String" style,  
 c. 1932



Fig. 112

Pot holder, c. 1935.  
 Dress, sugar, and feed sack fabrics; pieced and quilted by sewing machine.

"We was always quiltin' for cover, making up warm block quilts from old wool and the work clothes.... Everyone put their hand to piecing in the winter. All my boys pieced right along with the girls. It was work that had to be done." 37

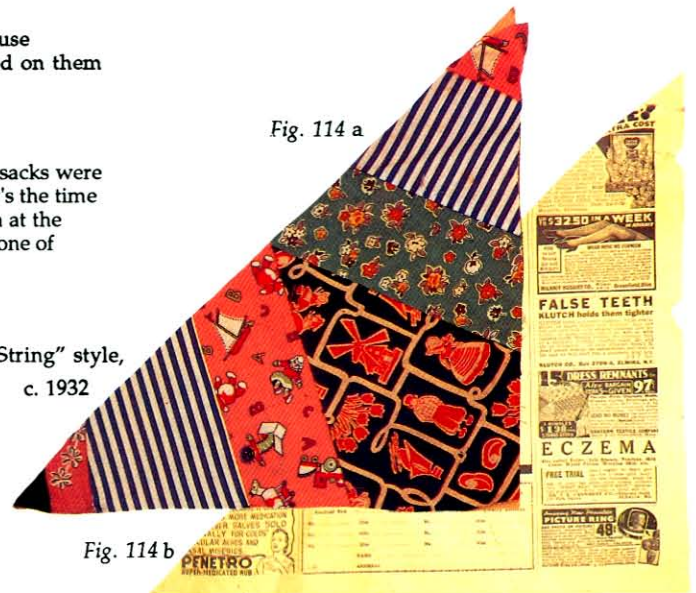


Fig. 114 a

Fig. 114 b

"When I get to the bottom of the bag I make a string quilt. You just pick up all the leftover pieces that's too small to cut a pattern from and you put them together however looks pleasing." 36



Fig. 115  
 Tobacco sack,  
 c. 1935.  
 Some women even pieced these tiny sacks together for quilt backings.