PROFESSIONAL MACHINE QUILTING
AND ITS IMPACT ON
THE CONTEMPORARY QUILT MOVEMENT

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PROFESSIONAL MACHINE QUILTING
AND ITS IMPACT ON
THE CONTEMPORARY QUILT MOVEMENT

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Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the role of Professional Machine Quilters within the contemporary quilt movement. Over the last thirty years, two important attitudinal shifts within the global quiltmaking community have occurred accompanied by technological developments in specialized machine-quilting equipment. These forces have facilitated the reintroduction of professional quilting services by entrepreneurial quilters. Presented here are the results of research investigating Professional Machine Quilters and their customers as well as hobbyist owners of professional-caliber equipment.

The participants in this research project, members of the contemporary quilt movement, are productive on creative, commercial, and educational levels within the quilt movement and they play a major role in the support, promotion, and perpetuation of the art of quiltmaking. By purchasing equipment, supplies, and textiles with which they can express their passion in quiltmaking, quilters are contributing to the on-going financial strength of the industry. The current acceptance and appreciation of machine quilting and the collaboration between quilters and the Professional Machine Quilters facilitate the ultimate goal, finished quilts, and thereby also facilitate the satisfaction and pride of the quilters. Consequently, the satisfied quilter begins to make another quilt, contributing again to an ever-growing industry and artform.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

To fully understand the contemporary world of quiltmaking requires an understanding of the role of Professional Machine Quilters. The development of highly specialized machine-quilting equipment over the last thirty years has spawned a cottage industry of Professional Machine Quilters who play a significant and substantial part in the $3.58 billion quilting industry.¹ This, in turn, makes their business activities and the impact on their customers worthy of analysis and report but, to date, this population has not been researched. The goal of my master’s thesis research was to achieve a deeper understanding of the community of Professional Machine Quilters, the equipment on which they work, the services they provide, and the customers of their services. I hoped to gain a broad perspective of the impact of this sub-community of professional quilters on the contemporary quilmaking movement.

The history of the Professional Machine Quilters begins in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a quilt revival gained momentum, influenced by the interest in Colonial Revivalism at the time of the nation’s Bicentennial. Culturally, quilters were also impacted by the back-to-nature movement which emphasized hand-made crafts, self-sufficiency, and simplistic, atavistic lifestyles. By the mid-1980s and early 1990s, the quilmaking industry was burgeoning. One might have expected a quilmaking revival
based on nationalistic pride and cultural movements related to naturalism and self-sufficiency to have lost popularity as society focused on new interests. In the case of quiltmaking, however, the opposite has occurred. This quilt revival showed no signs of waning and, in fact, grew annually. In 1994, *Quilter’s Newsletter Magazine* and Quilts, Inc. conducted market research on the time and money spent by quilters on their hobby. At that time, they reported over 15 million quilters in the United States, supporting an industry worth approximately $1.15 billion. The research study conducted by *Quilter’s Newsletter Magazines* and Quilts, Inc. was repeated every three years, most recently in 2010. By 2010, there were over 21 million quilters, a 40 percent increase over the 1994 figure. The total U. S. quilting industry was reported to be $3.58 billion with “dedicated” quilters spending more than $600 per year on quilting-related purchases.² The late-twentieth-century quilt revival had emerged into a full-blown quiltmaking movement. Today, quiltmaking is more popular than ever.

As the quiltmaking movement expanded, two major changes in attitude took place. First, the global quiltmaking community slowly and inexorably accepted machine quilting as an acceptable option for finishing a quilt. Second, numerous quilters decided to collaborate with entrepreneurial quilters who introduced professional quilting services using recently developed, highly specialized machine-quilting equipment. The data presented in this thesis will demonstrate that the high-quality, affordable machine-quilting services provided by these professional machine quilters has had a key role in the continuation and expansion of the craft of quiltmaking. The quiltmaking movement is a vital, vibrant, and profitable industry that is supported, enlarged, and sustained by the
availability of professional machine-quilting services. The services of these Professional Machine Quilters provide a significant contribution to the craft and its industry which is documented and recorded in this thesis.

Methods

In conducting research, I used a combination of community field work, interviews, and surveys to explore the community of Professional Machine Quilters, its member participants, their equipment, business practices, and customers. I investigated their motivations, methods, goals, aspirations, and accomplishments to obtain an insight into the world of the Professional Machine Quilters. I included the manufacturers and marketers of the equipment, notions, as well as the services used by the professional quilters in this study in order to understand the equipment and supplies with which the professional quilters worked. I investigated the customers of these professional machine-quilting services, including their motivations for hiring Professional Machine Quilters. I also learned about hobbyist owner/operators of professional-caliber equipment for whom the use is strictly personal and not geared toward income-production. Also, through interviews and surveys of the customers of these professional machine quilters, I examined the attitudes toward and the consequential impact of professional machine quilting on the craft of quiltmaking.

Community Field Work and Interviews

To gain an overview of the industry, I attended the Machine Quilter’s Exposition (MQX) in Manchester, New Hampshire, in April 2008. This was the sixth annual event
hosted by Mary Schilke and Janet-Lee Santesuanio. MQX is a celebration of machine quilting with classes, workshops, presentations, quilt shows, and a vendor mall. I accomplished several goals in attending this exposition. I met the hostesses, Mary Schilke and Janet-Lee Santesuanio, and enlisted their support in my research endeavors. In a single location, I perused a multitude of vendors of equipment, tools, patterns, and supplies available for machine quilting. I had an opportunity to speak to representatives of the major specialized sewing machine equipment, including Paul Statler, inventor of the Statler Stitcher®, a computerized system for quilting equipment. One day I spent as a volunteer, splitting my time between being a door-greeter and a show docent. I was able to gather sales brochures and hand-outs on all types of notions, supplies, and materials for machine quilting. I met numerous owners of this specialized equipment and saw first-hand award-winning machine-quilted quilts. Overall, the experience was a profound immersion into the contemporary field of machine quilters, its practitioners, supporters, and promoters.

In July, 2008, I was a guest at the meeting of the Ohio LongArm Quilters (OLAQ), a local group made up of thirty-eight members. The goal of its membership is the sharing of ideas and techniques for quilting, especially with regard to stand-up long-arm quilting equipment while, at the same time, expanding their knowledge of the craft. I presented my research, goals, and aspirations, and requested their help as a pilot group for the online survey I was developing. They agreed.
Online Survey

To achieve the goals of my research, I prepared an on-line survey using Checkbox survey software, licensed by the University of Akron. Through a single web-based link, the initial pilot survey included three interest tracks; one for those who perform professional machine quilting services as an income-generating enterprise; another for customers and users of these professional machine quilting services; and a third for members of the auxiliary manufacturing, marketing, and support industries supplying the professional machine quilting industry. In July, 2008, the Ohio LongArm Quilters Guild (OLAQ), volunteered to be the pilot group for the survey. The initial iteration of the survey was available to the membership exclusively in July, 2008.

Based on the feedback received from the OLAQ pilot study, I made changes to the survey, including adding a fourth track for hobbyists, owners of professional-caliber equipment who did not perform quilting services for hire. The revised on-line survey was open to the interested public from July 27, 2008 until December 1, 2008. The link was initially distributed to two local quilt guilds to which I belong as well as through several industry contacts I had made. Particularly, it was shared with Mary Schilke and Janet-Lee Santeusanio, founders and managers of MQX who, in turn, shared the survey link with their contacts. The OLAQ members were asked to disseminate the link to whomever they believed would be interested, including any of their customers. It was reported to me that the link and request for responses was posted on-line to several different organizations and email group lists.
The goal of this dissemination technique was a respondent-driven sample set that was both self-selected and self-reporting. This type of sample group is often referred to as a snowball sample because the requests for survey participation grow and spread by referrals from previous participants and other interested parties, in this case the community of professional machine quilters. The objective was to produce a sample set that was broader geographically, professionally, and operationally than may have been available through direct contact. By reaching individuals who may otherwise be isolated, this would provide larger, possibly more diverse, data sets from which equally broader assumptions could be made. The representativeness of the sample set would be more credible and reliable.

The survey opened with a release form, followed by the collection of demographic information. Then, the respondents selected their role from one of the following based on the criteria described: Professional Machine Quilter, Customer, Career Professional, and Hobbyist. Receipt of financial remuneration for quilting services indicated a Professional Machine Quilter. A person who worked for a company or business that provides services, supplies, or equipment to Professional Machine Quilters would respond as a Career Professional. The purchase of quilting services from a Professional Machine Quilter indicated a Customer. Owning professional caliber equipment, but quilting only for personal or charitable purposes, indicated a Hobbyist. The role chosen then dictated the survey track followed by that respondent.

The questions were a compendium of demographics, contact information, factual and historical data, and affect and motivational queries. For the Quilters – both
Professional and Hobbyist – the factual historical data included the length of machine ownership, the number of quilts quilted to date, the brands and models of equipment used, the notions and accessories employed, classes attended, and guild and support group memberships. The goal of the affect questions was to discover the motivations and objectives in buying this caliber of machine quilting equipment, the business plans, and the satisfactions gleaned from the machine quilting endeavors – whether personal or professional.

For the Customers of Professional Machine Quilting services, the factual and historical data collected included quantities of quilts serviced, number of professional quilters employed, methods of finding a professional quilter, and quilting style preferences. The affect information gathered included satisfaction with services received and methods of handling unsatisfactory results. Questions were asked regarding the impact that the availability of this service had on their quilt production levels. The respondents were also asked to describe their attitudinal changes towards machine quilting over the time since they first began quiltmaking.

For the Career Professionals, the questions asked about the company for which they worked – its product line and the support it provides to the Professional Machine Quilter. The survey requested information on the training and support of their products, how their products contribute to the machine quilting industry, and the marketing techniques employed to promote their products. The survey also asked about what changes the respondent had seen in the industry to date and what changes they desired or anticipated in the industry.
The survey questions in each track consisted of a combination of styles, including single-response radio-button controls, multi-option checkbox controls, and open-ended variable-length controls. The radio-button controls allowed for only one selection from the pre-determined list of responses offered. The checkbox controls provided multi-variation options to allow several answers from the pre-determined list presented. The response of “other” was often included in the response list for these questions as an open-ended entry to which the respondent could add their own comments. Questions with open-ended controls permitted the respondent to write unstructured answers in their own words to provide rich-text qualitatively expansive responses. See Appendix A for a listing of the questions for the entire survey.

The aggregated response data were collected on the University of Akron data servers and downloaded in tabular format as a comma-separated-values file (CSV). CSV files are accessed using an electronic spreadsheet software program, in this case Microsoft® Office Excel®. The raw data were organized by response track for printing, review, and analysis. Some data cleansing was required to standardize states and countries. The single-response questions were statistically evaluated for occurrence frequency which facilitated visual display in the form of pie-charts. The multi-variable option questions were also evaluated for occurrence frequency. In these multi-variable questions there is overlap because the respondents could select as many options as desired and provide their own response in the form of “other.” The responses for these questions are illustrated visually in the form of bar charts. The open-ended, unstructured questions designed to collect the responses in the words of the respondents were
reviewed and analyzed. These comments were thematically classified and coded based on the qualitative details provided by the respondents. The codes were entered into the electronic spreadsheet to be analyzed for occurrence frequency. Due to the overlap, these responses are also illustrated visually in the form of bar charts.

In total, there were 728 responses to the survey: 285 Professional Machine Quilters (39%); 156 Hobbyist Quilters who own professional caliber equipment (21%); 265 Customers of professional machine quilters (36%); and 22 Career Professionals or members of the support industries (3%). Of the users of machine-quilting equipment, 65 percent labeled themselves as professionals who have received financial remuneration for quilting services and 35 percent labeled themselves as hobbyists, owning professional caliber equipment but quilting only for personal or charitable purposes.

In the process of analyzing the survey data, I was able to determine key emergent themes on which to focus. Consequently, some survey data were not reported directly in the body of this report and this thesis does not supply the response statistics to each question asked in the survey. These data were used as foundational and background information. Also, due to the low response rate of Career Professionals to the online survey and my study of the equipment and supplies available to contemporary machine quilters through direct research, I decided to not utilize the data gathered in the responses of the Career Professionals in this thesis.

Due to the high incidence of comments in the online survey responses related to the use of websites as a marketing and promotional tool by the PMQ’s, I sent an email to 258 of the respondents who granted contact by email and provided an email address. In
the email, I asked if they currently use or plan to use a business website as a marketing and promotional tool. I received email replies from 70 of the respondents.

This thesis opens with a chapter on the evolution of machine-quilting techniques from the earliest sewing machines in the mid-nineteenth century to the today’s specialized equipment. Over the course of this evolution, attitudes towards machine quilting as an acceptable practice within the overall quiltmaking community have waxed and waned. The foundation provided by this historic perspective will explain the significance of the professional machine-quilting endeavors within the contemporary quilt movement. The next chapter provides insights into the contemporary world of machine quilting, including the production, marketing, and support of specialized machine-quilting equipment, without which the services provided by the professional machine quilters may never have expanded to the current levels. The fourth chapter focuses on the professional machine quilters, discussing their motivations, preferences, and aspirations within the industry in which they strive. The fifth chapter reports on the customers of the professional machine quilters and how the availability of these services has impacted their personal quiltmaking. Next is a chapter on the hobbyist owner/operators of professional-caliber equipment that looks at their motivations and attitudes towards machine quilting. The concluding chapter consolidates my findings and expounds on what I have learned about the professional machine-quilting community within the contemporary quilt movement. The collective research of surveys and interviews tells the story of the professional machine-quilting community and its place in the larger contemporary quilting movement.
Notes

1 “Quilting n America™ 2010” Internet [http://www.quiltersvillage.com/content_downloads/QuiltingInAmerica-2010.pdf], accessed June 15, 2010. The “Quilting in America™ 2010” report defined a “dedicated” quilter as female, 62 years old, well-educated, and affluent; she has been quilting for an average of 16 years. Not only does this “dedicated” quilter buy fabric, books, and magazines, the “dedicated” quilter owns an average of 2.7 sewing machines and in the preceding twelve months, 19 percent of them had purchased a new sewing machine, spending approximated $2,679.

2 Ibid.

CHAPTER II
EVOLUTION OF SEWING MACHINE USE IN QUILTMKING

This chapter traces the development of the use of the sewing machine in quiltmaking from its earliest stages to the present. Interest in the use of the sewing machine for quiltmaking has waxed and waned from the time of its development in the mid-nineteenth century to the present. At its introduction, the sewing machine was embraced as a time-saving and efficient device which could produce a finished quilt in little time. Through the late nineteenth- and early-twentieth centuries, its use was minimized while hand-work was idealized within the cultural mindset of the Colonial Revival movement. Today, with the reintroduction and refinement of machine quilting in the late-twentieth century, quilters once again utilize a machine for their quiltmaking endeavors. Understanding the evolving and changing attitudes towards machine quilting provides a foundation for understanding the place of Professional Machine Quilters in the contemporary quilt movement. This historic analysis will help explain the development of the attitudinal shift that predicated the acceptance and appreciation of the machine-quilting service industry within the larger, present-day quiltmaking community, allowing it to flourish and grow.
Quilting Basics

At its simplest, a quilt is a three-layer sandwich with a decorative fabric layer as its top, a lofted filling or batting (also known as wadding in Europe and Australia) in the middle, and a final fabric bottom layer called a backing. The top can be one single piece of fabric (a whole-cloth quilt top) or it can be pieced and/or appliquéd. The backing is usually, but not always, plain or undecorated. The batting provides warmth and substance to the final quilt. It can be as light as a single piece of cotton flannel fabric or constructed of lofted, spun fibers of bamboo, cotton, polyester, silk, wool, or a combination of any of these fibers.

To function as a quilt, these three components must be layered and attached together in a process which is called quilting. The quilting process can be accomplished in a myriad of ways: the quilting can be performed with hand stitching or the layers can be sewn together with a sewing machine. The quilting process is both functional and decorative. It is functional in that it stabilizes and reinforces the batting fibers which produce air pockets that hold and distribute heat more efficiently than the layers alone. It is also decorative, creating secondary visual effects that enhance the overall beauty of the quilt.

Sewing Machine Development and Its Early Use in Quiltmaking

Quilting textile layers for warmth and protection is an age-old process, accomplished worldwide for centuries with time-consuming and painstaking hand-sewing. When the sewing machine was introduced in the mid-nineteenth century, sewers and quilters realized how it could then save hours of time. Consequently, the sewing
machine has been used to perform some, and in a few extant examples - all, of the stitching required to construct a quilt. For piecing of the top and backing layers, anchoring decorative appliquéd fabric pieces, and the quilting process itself, quilters have long appreciated the ease, speed, and consistency produced by a sewing machine. Suellen Meyer in her 1989 article “Early Influences of the Sewing Machine and Visible Machine Stitching on Nineteenth Century Quilts” stated:

It is difficult to determine how many nineteenth-century quilts have visible machine quilting in the appliqué or quilting. Such quilts are rarer than quilts which include machine piecing. Jonathan Holstein asserts that while machines were seldom used for appliqué or quilting, they were commonly employed for piecing. He reports that about half of the quilts he has seen which date after the 1860s are machine pieced and that the edges of both the appliqué and pieced quilts [the binding] are commonly finished by hand.¹

Meyer goes on to estimate that “perhaps as many as ten per cent of all quilts during the period from 1865 to 1900 in some areas bear some machine appliqué or quilting.”²

The supposition that machine quilting is a modern-day deviation of authentic quilting is Myth #6 on Judy Anne Breneman’s “Womenfolk; History of Quilting website.”³ In refuting this myth, Breneman stated the now-held belief among quilt historians that, due to the high-cost of sewing machines in the mid-nineteenth century, when initially manufactured, visible machine quilting on a quilt was evidence of ownership of this luxury item. The cost of this significant time-saving device was a considerable portion of a family’s earnings. In 1859 the price of a sewing machine was $110. With an annual average family income of approximately $500, this represented more than 20 percent of a family’s yearly wages.⁴ The time saved in the labor-intensive process of hand-sewing for the home and family, including all clothing, bedding, and domestic items, compensated for the outlay in money. With a treadle machine, a calico
dress required less than one hour to construct compared to over six and one-half hours by hand. Often women shared machines to distribute the cost over several families.

Barbara Brackman, quilt historian, reported:

The manufacturers cleverly donated machines to ministers’ wives and other upstanding women, who then shared their machines. This marketing strategy was designed to give the sewing machine a certain cachet, and, most important, to prove that housewives could operate machinery – a concept that was not self-evident.

During the same time, Cyrus McCormick of reaper fame recognized a similar cost-prohibitive nature of his product. To make his reapers more affordable, McCormick devised a two-payment plan for reaper buyers – a down payment with a second payment plus interest the following year. To encourage individual sales of the sewing machine, Edward Clark, partner to Isaac Singer in the I. M. Singer & Co., modified this financing technique with a rent-to-own program that was, for its time, revolutionary. Clark’s system was an installment plan with a lease agreement. The customer made a down payment of five dollars, which was followed by lease payments of three to five dollars that were then applied to the purchase price of the machine. The ploy was so successful that Singer sewing machine sales almost tripled in 1856 with 2,564 units compared to 883 in 1855.

Anita Loscalzo, in her research on the history of the sewing machine and its influence on quiltmaking, reported that there were approximately 500,000 sewing machines in use in the United States by 1860 and customers were utilizing the machine for every sewing purpose, including all techniques involved in quiltmaking – piecing, appliqué, and the quilting itself. The International Quilt Study Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln has in its collection an Irish Chain postage stamp quilt made in
eastern Pennsylvania between 1840 and 1860 that was pieced on a sewing machine. The New England Quilt Museum’s collection includes a Basket Quilt dated to 1850 which contains machine appliqué. The Art Institute of Chicago holds a machine-quilted Whig Rose (also known as Pumpkin Blossom) quilt made by Mrs. George F. Gale in 1848, purported to be quilted on the first sewing machine brought into Washtenaw County, Michigan. State fair organizers, recognizing the prestige and honor placed on machine work, made entry categories to award prize money for entrants. For some time in the late nineteenth-century, the Iowa State fair provided a premium for machine quilting. One of the most famous early machine-quilted quilts resides in the quilt collection of the Smithsonian Institute. It is a machine-quilted crib quilt made by Joseph Granger of Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1879. Time was a factor in the making of this quilt. Reportedly after his wife won a contest with a quilt that he believed took too much time, Granger set out to show her the time that could be saved if she quilted by machine instead of by hand.

The attitudes towards sewing machines and, consequently, attitudes toward quiltmaking changed significantly as the nineteenth century came to a close. The prestige of sewing machine ownership dwindled in an inverse ratio to their availability. As early patents expired and cheap models were produced, the sewing machine became more ordinary, losing that cachet that was the goal of the early marketers. In her article on the disappearance of the sewing machine between 1890 and 1925, Marguerite Connolly stated:

By 1890 the sewing machine had lost its novelty and had become an accepted part of domestic life. It was now too common for its prior status symbol role, and the
American public had begun to take it for granted. . . . The sewing machine was ubiquitous in America by the end of the nineteenth century.  

With this pervasiveness and ubiquity came the perception that machine work itself was now common and ordinary, no longer a focal point. In contrast, handwork, especially embroidery, was showcased and admired in the late nineteenth-century. This shift coincided with and was influenced by the art craze of the mid- to late-nineteenth century as interest in the Aesthetic Decorative Movement swept the nation. Patchwork-style quilts were now viewed as plain, old-fashioned, and inartistic and, consequently, fell out of favor. Crazy quilts made with opulent fabrics and decorated with extensive ornamental hand-embroidery became the preferred style during the 1880s and 90s. As the prevalent needle-arts fad, the crazy quilts supplaned interest in traditional patchwork quilts and relegated patchwork to the realms of both fledgling sewers and older women incapable of “fine work.” This fad, however, was short-lived and, ultimately, as the Aesthetic Decorative Movement waned, so did the preference for the over-embellished look of crazy quilts.

Colonial Revival Influences on the Decline in Machine Quilting

With the demise in popularity of crazy quilts, traditional pieced and appliquéd quilts became fashionable once again, particularly as the quilt revival of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century got under way. The quilt revival was an integral part of the Colonial Revival Movement in decorative arts which itself was steeped in patriotism and nationalism. In her study of Colonial Revival needlework, Beverly Gordon related:
an initial thrust of the colonial revival was an interest on the part of white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant Americans – who felt they were being displaced by the rising tide of immigration and urbanization – in perpetuating an image of the colonial era as more virtuous, noble time. Alarmed by economic depressions, labor unrest, and the apparent end of the frontier, these individual sought to . . . [claim] their ancestors’ virtuous qualities as their own.\textsuperscript{15}

For women, according to Gordon, those qualities included orderliness, good household management, cleanliness, harmony, consideration of others, simplicity, and honesty.\textsuperscript{16}

As the era of the Colonial Revival progressed, the resident Americans sought to emulate their ancestors’ virtuous qualities, and to promulgate these values and ideals to all newcomers who wished to become authentic Americans. In her essay “Perfecting the Past,” Virginia Gunn discussed the influences of the Colonial Revival movement on the attitudes, tastes, and stylistic preferences of the quiltmakers of that era. By looking to the past for design and decorative inspiration, followers of the Colonial Revival style participated in their ancestors’ history and hence, their attributes. Gunn explained:

Authors often note that the Colonial Revival started in an era of nationalism and patriotism as a reaction on the part of mainstream white Protestant Americans to changes wrought by industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. The world as they had known it was changing rapidly. They sought refuge in the past and used both fact and myth to help socialize newcomers to principles they held dear. Mainstream Americans believed that early historical figures and pioneer values needed to be esteemed by all who lived in the United States.\textsuperscript{17}

The values were esteemed and emulated and this emulation included the practice of hand-quilting. Once again, quilting by hand, in its simplicity, became the standard for quiltmakers; it was considered ancestrally authentic and hence became the preferred technique for finishing quilts.

Though stylistically, the patchwork and appliqué patterns being resurrected were actually pre-Civil War and not colonial at all, quiltmakers romanticized the process to the
techniques of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and eschewed the use of the sewing machine. Early in this quilt revival, quilters were admonished to consider only hand-quilting as worthy of their efforts. In regard to the finishing of a quilt, Sybil Lanigan stated in the October 1894 *Ladies Home Journal* that “[t]he worst way of all is to use the sewing machine for the purpose.”¹⁸ Suellen Meyer, in her study of machine quilting, commented:

> By the end of the nineteenth century, handwork, not machine work, was the status symbol, for the handmade stitch spoke of leisure time and experience with the needle. Given this new attitude, women returned to appliquéing and quilting by hand – quiet, relaxing activities which demonstrated that they had sufficient leisure to sew a fine seam.¹⁹

While handwork may have been the preferred and idealized approach for the actual quilting process during this period, machine use was not wholly abandoned. By this time, more than fifty years after its introduction to the public, the sewing machine was common and its use was accepted and expected, especially for piecing the patchwork quilt top. A review of the online database of the International Quilt Study Center’s Collection of pieced quilts made between 1900 and 1940 reveals that 338 of the quilts were hand-pieced and 389 quilts were pieced by machine.²⁰ These results indicate that, while not in widespread use for quilting, the sewing machine was not eschewed entirely in the early-twentieth-century quilt revival. It was used extensively on the processes that were less readily visible and apparent.

Even for the quilting itself, the sewing machine was not completely avoided. *McCall’s Needlework and Decorative Arts* magazine in the summer of 1930 contains an article on quiltmaking extolling the appropriateness of patterns offered for the Colonial style. In their encouragement of the hobby, the authors recognized that minimal time
might preclude the modern woman from undertaking quiltmaking so they indicated that
several of the quilts offered were specifically planned for sewing-machine work. By
giving their approval to use of the sewing machine, the editors were suggesting that
partial participation in the Colonial Revival Movement was permissible and would still
imbue the desired characteristics to the quilt and its maker. The article stated:

Some are exact reproductions of the old Colonial quilts, and some are in the
Colonial feeling but new designs. All of them can be made by hand, but some are
especially designed to be easily done by machine. The woman who is too busy to
spare time for handwork, can still have lovely quilts by choosing one of the
patterns designed for machine work . . . . Even the quilting is designed in a fairly
continuous line so the thread will seldom need to be broken.21

For convenience and sewing ease, the authors also suggested that the blocks be quilted
individually and then sewn together in strips. This is an early reference to what would
become a quilt-as-you-go approach that would be considered quite modern in the
contemporary quilt movement.

Attitudes from the Early to the Mid-Twentieth Century

Despite the extensive use of the machine for piecing and the occasional mention
of its use for quilting, the attitude favoring the authenticity and purity of hand-quilting
persisted into the 1920s and 30s. In the 1940s quiltmaking as a popular pastime
diminished as the concerns of World War II refocused the nation. There was, however, a
constant grassroots continuation of quiltmaking through the middle of the century. Many
publishers recognized this and continued to market patterns and instructions for this
needle art. While the 1976 celebration of the American Bicentennial is often considered
to mark the inception of the contemporary quilt movement, interest in quiltmaking started
to swell in the 1960s and there were several books published that contained instructions
for quilting. The few and abbreviated references to quilting on a sewing machine reflect the conflict over approaching this process mechanically rather than by hand. By the middle of the twentieth-century, the sewing machine was one hundred years old and no one could remember a time without one. Still, the earlier perception of the authenticity, purity, and suitability of hand-quilting endured.

McCall’s 1964 Needlework Treasury: A Learn & Make Book was a compendium of fourteen years of articles that had appeared in the special interest publication McCall’s Needlework & Crafts Magazine. In the quilting instructions, the author indicated that the quilting “can be done in hand or using a quilting frame.” No mention is made of using a sewing machine to anchor the quilt layers together.

In 1963, foreshadowing the impending bicentennial resurgence in patriotism, nostalgia, and renewed colonial revivalism, the editors of Woman’s Day magazine asked esteemed author and needleperson Rose Wilder Lane to author a book honoring America’s needlework based on museum collections from around the country. In the Preface to Lane’s book, the editors stated their intentions for this publication;

As the great canvas unfolded, we, as editors, took pride anew in the work of past generations of American women who had created the art of American Needlework. The beauty, the patterns, the colors, the whole flavor and feeling of the needlework art were a true expression of American individuality and the American way of life. The canvas was so dramatic and so inspiring and, in these troubled times, so reassuring and so illustrative of our great past and of the strength and meaning of America. . .

In the chapter on quilting, Lane provided extensive instructions for hand-quilting with several suggestions geared to the beginner for assuring early success in an endeavor which may, she warned, become addictive. In a brief reference to machine quilting which contains no specific instructions, Lane commented simply that “Although classic
quilting is considered a handcraft, it may be done on a sewing machine. Straight quilting lines and simple designs are most adaptable to machine work.”25 While Lane’s description of hand-quilting as “classic” indicated her belief that it was more typical and time-honored, she did recognize the possibility that some quilters might be interested in quilting with the machine.

In 1966, Dolores Hinson published one of the first books dedicated to quiltmaking which did contain a chapter on sewing a quilt by machine. Acknowledging the sewing machine technology that had existed at this point for over one hundred years, Hinson conceded that “many women would as lief to get along without a range or vacuum cleaner as to try to keep house without their sewing machines.” In seeking help for writing machine-quilting instructions, Hinson stated that she consulted “several well-qualified seamstresses.” Ultimately, she found that she could rely upon only one of them, a woman who had been teaching machine sewing for a machine company for twenty years. Though several experts were consulted, only one had enough experience with quiltmaking by machine. Hinson related that, despite this expertise and using the latest machine models, even this educator had difficulty with certain aspects of machine quilting. Hinson admonished her readers, “By using care and being exact every step of the process, the quilt pieced by machine should be as beautiful as any hand-sewn quilt.”26 The difficulty that Hinson experienced in finding an experienced machine quilter is indicative of how very few quilters were actively pursuing the process with a sewing machine.
Reintroduction of Sewing-Machine Use to Quiltmaking

In 1970, Jean Ray Laury opened up new frontiers for contemporary quilters in her book *Quilts and Coverlets: A Contemporary Approach* by encouraging the fledgling machine quilter. She recognized that modern quilters were capturing the spirit and essence of American quilts while their “[c]reativity and inventiveness make it possible to modify and rejuvenate the old approaches and techniques.” In this, Laury gave them tacit permission to explore new avenues of quilting while being true to their patriotism. She explained further:

The development of technology . . . gave us a sewing machine that can be utilized as an extension of the hand. It is possible to exert better control over these new machines than over previous ones. This makes the machine very sensitive to the influence of the designer, and the sewing machine generously adds to the possibilities from which the quilt maker can choose. The use of this efficient and versatile machine should not be regarded as an “impure” approach to quilting but as a means of expanding the potentials of designing.

In this book, Laury included a chapter on the quilting process in which she primarily provided instructions for hand-quilting. She encouraged using the sewing machine as a creative tool with the description of how an illustrated quilt, “A Midwinter Day-Mare,” was constructed by its maker, Else Brown (see figure 2.1). Laury hinted of the possibilities and alluded to things to come by explaining how the quilt was made. Brown used the sewing machine “as though it were a drawing pencil. . . . because it is difficult to handle three large layers of material,” putting the stitches into a flat piece of fabric, backed only with nylon net. Laury further explained:

With the aid of a darning foot on the sewing machine, the design was freely stitched on the right side of the base material. This “freewheeling” stitch, with the machine’s feed-dogs lowered and the presser foot raised, made it possible to guide the stitching easily over the surface.
Figure 2.1 “A Midwinter Day-Mare” by Else Brown, ca. 1970. This is an early example of free-motion machine quilting and stuffed trapunto work. Reprinted with permission from *Quilts and Coverlets: A Contemporary Approach* by Jean Ray Laury.
The open areas were then stuffed through slits made in the nylon net, in a type of trapunto, traditional stuffed work, and the piece was then lined to complete it. This short explanation is the extent of any instruction that Laury provided on how to accomplish quilting with the sewing machine but the illustrated samples in her book may have piqued the imaginations of contemporary stitchers.

*Quilter’s Newsletter Magazine*, founded in 1969 as one of the first magazines dedicated to quiltmaking, seemingly sensed that quilters might be interested in detailed instructions for machine quilting because, in 1974, the editors approached Ernest B. Haight of David City, Nebraska, for guidance. For approximately thirty years, Haight had machine-pieced quilt tops which were then hand-quilted by his family of quilters – his wife Isabelle, his mother, and his father. By 1960, the pile of accumulated tops ready to be quilted was overwhelming, so Haight decided to experiment with machine quilting to expedite the completion of his mountain of work. Haight’s superior workmanship, evidenced by the multiple ribbons he received at the Nebraska State Fairs, garnered much attention and interest in his techniques for machine quilting. In 1973, at the urging of the Superintendent of Needlework at the Nebraska State Fair, Haight self-published and marketed for one dollar a complete set of machine quilting instructions based on his years of experience. Haight’s advice was encouraging, but guarded. Not wanting anyone to think that the process was unproblematic, he stated that “[i]f carefully done, this system really does work, but like all other arts, practice, patience, and experience are necessary to develop the skills to do really fine work.”

In 1975, Elsa Brown published *Creative Quilting* with the intention to “present the basic traditional techniques of quilting and patchwork, as well as the imaginative
application of these techniques in contemporary work.”31 She remarked that “[m]any artists who formerly worked with more traditional materials have turned to cloth. . . .

[B]ut as often as not, the contemporary artist is not even aware that what he is doing is actually quilting.”32 Brown provided thorough instructions on all facets of quiltmaking, including piecing, appliqué, and the quilting itself, offering instructions for working on a sewing machine alongside the handwork instructions. In her essay on machine quilting, she described presser foot and darning foot quilting, with guidance on both techniques. Comparing darning foot quilting to gesture drawing, she explained that this approach allows free movement of the fabric, permitting drawing with the machine. As an early proponent of machine quilting, Brown supported re-evaluating strict tenets eschewing machine work. She stated:

Machine quilting should not be regarded as a substitute for hand quilting; it has a unique quality all its own. There are those who believe that anything done by hand is better than something done on the machine. This standard may have had some validity years ago, but it certainly does not apply today. We can only speculate as to whether the colonial women would have used machines if they had had them. It seems to me that unless there is an esthetic reason for doing a particular job by hand, there is no reason not to do it on the machine if that is faster and easier.33

While Ernest Haight’s directions focused on straight gridded lines produced by the controlled direction of the sewing machine, Karen Bakke, author of The Sewing Machine as a Creative Tool, emphasized an innovative technique to facilitate curved and asymmetrical quilting lines. Bakke had long enjoyed using a sewing machine as a tool for drawing, embellishing, and embroidery and had learned that, by dropping the feed dog mechanism in the darning foot mode of Brown, the fabric could be moved under the needle in any direction. In her 1976 book, Bakke suggested that quilters use this method
to produce curved, arched, and circular quilting patterns.”\textsuperscript{34} Without putting a label on it, Bakke was one of the first to describe and encourage free-motion quilting. Her primary goal with this book was to encourage creativity and experimentation with the sewing machine. She pointed out that because “There is little tradition in the creative use of the sewing machine. . . . there is no right or wrong way to approach this work.” Despite very little experience with machine work, Bakke was convinced that much more could be done with a sewing machine than had heretofore been attempted and she began applying new approaches to ancient techniques. Sensitive to her audience, she said:

This book is not an attempt to supplant hand sewing methods, but to supplement them. As an extension of the hand, the sewing machine has some obvious advantages – namely that it is far faster than hand work, and it also gives a different look.\textsuperscript{35}

Bakke also assured her readers that, like her, they need not be accomplished sewers, only familiar with how a machine works. In fact, she suspected that unfamiliarity was an advantage in that the sewer was unaware of the “rules” attached to the machine. In their blissful ignorance, neophytes might forge new techniques because they did not realize that whatever they were imagining could not be done. Bakke’s hoped that her “book [would] open the door to new uses of the sewing machine and show it as a multidimensional tool that it is.”\textsuperscript{36}

Despite this apparent buildup of goodwill, the feelings toward machine quilting remained mixed in the early 1970s. The conflict between using hand or machine quilting still existed; authenticity remained an issue. With the 1976 bicentennial emphasis on tradition, handmade quilts meant just that – making quilts entirely with a hand-held needle, attempting to model “grandma” and other ancestors. Quiltmakers often felt
compelled, in a virtually restrictive manner, to piece and appliqué their tops, quilt the
layers together, and finish the edges with binding exclusively by hand. To many,
quiltmaking by hand was more than the ideal; it was the de facto rule. By avoiding the
sewing machine, quilters believed they were honoring the image and rituals of their ancestors.

In 1973, just in time for the nation’s bicentennial, Alice Gammell published her
patterns for quilt blocks as “an incentive to others to become interested in quilts and
quilting.” The “Miss Polly” referenced in the title is the author’s “memory picture”
of her efforts as a young girl to “learn the elements of good seaming.” 37 In relating the
past of patchwork, Gammell described the efforts, motivations, and attitudes of our
“ancestors” to quiltmaking. She explained:

> Our ancestors valued their quilts not only for their beauty and comfort but
> because they were a source of self-expression that would live on and on, to be
> handed down from mother to daughter. These quilts were studies in thrift,
> economy and skill. The patterns exemplified wise planning . . . Every woman
> who made or designed her first quilt had the satisfaction of knowing she had
> created an article of lasting interest. It was so in accord with its surroundings that
> it was bound to be treasured for all time. . . . Nearly all of these earlier quilts
> were marvelous examples of creative craftsmanship. Accuracy was of supreme
> importance. Their construction was correct in detail and fine workmanship, but
> their artistic beauty was also a thing to admire. 38

The implication is that by participating in quiltmaking, the 1970s quilters could absorb
the attributes of “our ancestors,” such as thriftiness and economy, and could emulate
them in making admirable and beautiful family heirlooms.

Gammell provided details of eight steps for making a quilt. In the directions for
step 7, she explained, with accompanying photos, how to hand-quilt on a frame or in a
hoop or, as a time-saving technique, how to hand-tie the quilt. She did not mention using a sewing machine for any step in the process other than attaching an edging or binding. She closed her instructions with her “rules” of quiltmaking in order to make a finished quilt that will “bring you much joy” and “be the envy of all.”39 By avoiding mention of a sewing machine, Gammell further implied that, in order to quilt correctly and authentically, the stitching should be performed by hand.

Another of the first books on patchwork designs and construction, published also in 1973, was Beth Gutcheon’s The Perfect Patchwork Primer. In it, she refuted claims that quiltmakers were experiencing a time of “revival, an exercise in romance or nostalgia.” Gutcheon saw this period of quiltmaking in the 1970s as “a new and vigorous phase of a perennial American tradition, using different tools, expressing different aspects of ourselves, and based upon a different store of information.”40 She included the sewing machine as a new tool – but only up to a point. A quilter could machine quilt, but Gutcheon did not recommend it. In fact, she tried to dissuade anyone who might be interested when she told her readers that “it is also possible to machine quilt, though to my mind, it is more trouble than it’s worth.” After outlining the challenges of machine quilting, whether using a machine-guided technique with the presser foot or “with the machine set for embroidery and the work [fed] through manually,” Gutcheon conceded “that this may be all sour grapes on my part, since I don’t happen to like machine quilting myself.” She offered only a modicum of encouragement, saying “by all means try it if you want to.”41 While her initial claim that the 1970s were an age of “different tools,” Gutcheon was loathe using a sewing machine for the quilting process.
In 1980 Robbie Fanning and her husband Tony authored *The Complete Book of Machine Quilting*. In the introduction, the Fannings explained their motivations for quilting with a machine:

> With a machine-quilted quilt, I can have something durable, machine-washable, friendly, fast (as little as six hours to piece and quilt, depending on the size), and not at all so precious that I don’t feel free enough to crush or desert it. Add that to my love of the sewing machine as the (emphasis author) tool to mold thread and fabric into something warm and touchable – and that’s why I machine quilt.42

The Fannings’ advice may have been a bit too revolutionary for traditional quilters in the early 1980s. It broke too many “rules” of quilting, offering a radical departure from not only the ideal but the norm. While the majority of quilters remained committed to hand-quilting, others welcomed this book. Like the earlier quilters identified by *McCall’s* magazine in 1930, many people wanted to participate in the quilt revival but time precluded full participation in the traditional manner. Also, as this was, concurrently, the age of technology and computerization, the use of the sewing machine was now assumed and often preferred by would-be quilters. Thus, with its thorough directions and advice, the Fannings’ book encouraged quilters, once again, to embrace the use of the sewing machine for quiltmaking.

Not only did the Fannings provide an in-depth, detailed expansion of Haight’s gridded approach, they also put a label on the technique of dropping the presser foot suggested by Bakke. The Fannings called it “Free-Machine Quilting” and extolled the freedom possible with this approach that allowed the quilt to be moved in any direction desired, thus eliminating the need to rotate or turn the quilt. They told quilters that after some practice, “you can stitch in and out of tiny corners and around intricate curves.
. . . It’s fast, it’s easy, it’s exhilarating.” The advice they gave to approaching free-machine quilting was prescient:

The main reason you would choose free-machine quilting over presser-foot quilting is that the quilting line involves many turns, angles, stops, and starts. As for finding designs for free-machine quilting, all you have to do is start looking – and record what you see. Try these: meander lines (from watching the pattern of children moving through a playground); freely interlaced lines designed from dropping ribbons on a table); sketches of building of San Francisco.

Exploring more than the staid and traditional straight-stitch quilting, they gave comprehensive detail on zigzag, twin-needle, and decorative quilting.

The Fanning book foreshadowed the professional machine-quilting movement in two very important ways. First, next to a photo of a bootmaker’s sewing machine with a 360-degree rotating head, the Fannings suggested that quilting as a service, using an industrial head, could be a means of earning an income. Using words echoed today by several of the professional machine quilters when asked why they purchased professional equipment, the Fannings advised:

. . . there is a steady demand for industrial machine quilting of quilt tops, both from individuals (and it can be done by mail) and from firms like upholstery shops and decorators. If your domestic machine groans at the bulk you’re trying to push through it, then yes, an industrial machine can punch through buildings like Superman, let alone two or three thickness of quilt batting.

The second important foreshadowing of the professional quilting movement was granting permission to allow someone else to quilt your top while still retaining ownership of the piece. The Fannings included an illustration of the quilt “Bridging” by quilt artist Radka Donnell. In the caption, Donnell offered advice to novice quilters regarding her attitude about the process. She stated:

I know many women who have started a quilt and put the unfinished top away in a drawer because of the thought of having to hand quilt them. I want my work to
inspire women to finish at least the top and have it quilted by another woman without having to feel less proud or less of an artist for doing it. Delegating the finishing work to another person has helped me to respect other people and understand the collective process of art as connecting, as sharing, and complete only when shared.45

In this statement, Donnell touched on several aspects of the professional quilt movement that would later be reiterated by the quilters and their customers. Delegation is not only permissible, it is preferable if it means the quilt gets finished, manifesting the credo ‘it’s not a quilt until it’s quilted.’ This mindset re-introduced the idea to a new generation of quilters that there is freedom in collaboration, allowing each of the participants to contribute her or his best skills, highlighting what can be achieved in the collective, shared process.

At the same time that the Fannings published their book, Barbara Johannah wrote Continuous Curve Quilting: Machine Quilting the Pieced Quilt to present the “sewing machine equivalent of hand quilting.” Time, Johannah realized, was usually a significant factor when a quilter chose to use a sewing machine. She said, “Sometimes the choice is not between a hand quilted quilt and a machine quilted quilt, it is between a machine quilted quilt and no quilt at all.”46 She also understood that, even with speedier techniques, people wanted the time-honored aesthetic. Using continuous, gentle arcs that imitated a traditional look without the intermittent stops-and-starts which hindered machine quilting, Johannah’s goal was to produce the desired conventional visual effect using a faster, modern machine. She said:

One by one the branches of quiltmaking are becoming integrated with the sewing machine, appliqué, piecing, and finally quilting. While demonstrating at quilt shows, I’ve watched the evolution of acceptance go from “it’s not the right way” to “it works, but the workmanship isn’t as good” to “of course, how else would you do it”. Someday we will be wondering what all the fuss was about.47
Not long after Johannah published her book, Pat Cody authored one of the earliest machine-quilting design books featuring continuous line motifs. *Continuous Line Quilting Designs Especially for Machine Quilting* was published in 1984. Cody presented one hundred pages of uninterrupted motifs, primarily border designs, to utilize the “range of fabric movement that is possible with a machine.” She also outlined the motivations of machine quilters:

Machine quilting is a valuable addition to your repertoire of techniques and is especially suited to certain purposes. (1) When fabric is difficult or impossible to hand quilt, your machine gives you the go ahead. (2) When quilted items get heavy use and frequent washing, machine quilting can provide durability. (Two threads are stronger than one.) (3) Machine-stitched lines are more visible, causing great loft with thinner battings and making a stronger design statement. (4) Machine quilting is faster than hand quilting, so you bring alive more ideas in the same [amount of] time.48

The previous publications, with their thorough instructions and encouragement, helped set a new direction, but it was not until 1987, when Harriet Hargrave authored *Heirloom Machine Quilting* that machine quilting took off in a big way. Quiltmakers were now ready to accept machine quilting and Hargrave was heralded for her approach. Her book was a huge hit! People everywhere wanted to participate in the machine-quilting trend. The quilt shops could not find enough machine-quilting instructors for all the quilters clamoring to learn this “new” process. Several factors may have contributed to the impact that Hargrave made on the acceptability of machine quilting. First, the timing was finally right – quilting was more popular than ever, and, culturally, leisure time was an even scarcer commodity, so quilters were searching for new, easy, and time-saving methods. More significantly, Hargrave’s approach, which combined Fannings’ “free machine” technique and Johannah’s continuous curves, seemed to be
more conciliatory toward the customary and expected appearance of traditional hand-
quilted work. In the Introduction to the first edition of her book, Hargrave promised her
readers that machine quilting is “beautiful, fast, and relatively easy . . . while quickly
reproducing lovely hand quilting patterns.” In the Forward, she stated:

Not every quilt is meant to be a masterpiece or an heirloom. Functional, everyday
quilts are the ones we remember and cherish. That is not to say we cannot create
an heirloom using the machine, but the majority of the quilts made today are for
decorating purposes, gifts, and bedding, just as they were fifty years ago. With
spare time at a minimum, our sewing machine becomes a working partner in our
creative endeavor.”

Hargrave emphasized using what she called “free motion” quilting, with a darning foot
and dropped feeddogs, done with invisible nylon thread to achieve the look of traditional
hand work while enjoying the time-saving benefits of machine work. With an approach
that leaned toward disguise of the process, Hargrave allowed the quilter to bend the rules
without a complete disregard for them. This watershed book, with its acquiescence to a
traditional look and permission to utilize current machine technology, marked the
beginning of widespread acceptance of machine quilting.

Widespread Acceptance of Machine Quilting

Evidence of wider acceptance of machine quilting occurred in 1989 when Caryl
Bryer Fallert received the Best of Show ribbon at the American Quilter’s Society’s
annual quilt show in Paducah, Kentucky. Her Corona II: The Solar Eclipse, was the first
machine-quilted quilt to win this coveted award. This award, however, was not granted
without its controversies. Dr. Virginia Gunn, as a scheduled speaker for the show, was
invited along with all the other teachers and speakers to attend the preview exhibit. She
reported that upon viewing the Best of Show ribbon hung on a beautiful machine-quilted
masterpiece, there were still exclamations of surprise that a machine-quilted quilt was found worthy of this accolade. Linda Lasco of the American Quilter’s Society reported that, in the hue and cry that ensued, many quilters withdrew their membership in the national society, so indignant that this ribbon did not go to a hand-quilted quilt. While machine piecing was widely accepted and expected, to many quilters, machine quilting was still not considered authentic and valid.

By the time her second edition of *Heirloom Machine Quilting* was published in 1990, Hargrave modified the tone of her introduction significantly. Hargrave admitted to previously working hard to maintain a low profile while trying to avoid “making waves in the hand quilting world.” By this time, attitudes had changed as more students clamored for classes, however, traditionalists still clung to their claims about the unworthiness of machine quilting. Related to the controversy surrounding Fallert’s AQS Best of Show award, Hargrave stated:

Instead of seeing what a magnificent piece it was regardless of technique, many quilters had trouble accepting the fact that is was machine-quilted. I look forward to the day when all quilters, hand and machine, look at what the actual quilting lends to the quilt. The quality of the work and the skill it takes to achieve the final product should be appreciated. I feel we spend too much energy debating whether machine or hand is best. There are enough quilts in all our heads that need to come out, that as long as the workmanship is of high quality, it should not matter what technique was used.

These exact words were reiterated in the Introduction to the 1995 third edition of her book. Controversy and criticism still existed but manufacturers had been responding to the pulse of the quilting community with new notions and battings specifically geared toward machine quilting. This necessitated an updated fourth edition of her book. In the
Introduction to the most recent 2004 edition of her book, Hargrave recounted the attitudes prior to her first book. She stated:

In 1980, however, machine quilting was a dirty word, and I have to admit that I apologized for it more times than I like to remember. (My local guild did not even allow you to participate in show-and-tell if your project was machine-pieced or quilted.) I find that new quilters generally are not familiar with the history of the revival of machine quilting. We all just take it for granted now. But in the early 1980s, when Marti Michell saw my reproduction quilts and asked me to write a book on my techniques and methods, I felt I was walking into a lion’s den. You know the attitude: a quilt is not a quilt unless it is hand-quilted.55

Quiltmakers no longer consider machine quilting a “dirty word.” In fact, several of the customer respondents to the online survey were unaware that this had ever been the case. Due to the work of Hargrave and her precursors, a quilting paradigm shift had occurred, one that significantly changed the quilt community.

Within the contemporary quilt movement, machine quilting has now progressed beyond the earlier controversies to achieve a status of glorification for its own merits and characteristics, over and above the speediness factor. No longer is any attempt made to camouflage machine quilting; instead it is celebrated. Quilters have discovered that some techniques, like dense stippling and echo quilting, are much easier and faster to accomplish on the machine than by hand. Machine quilting is now an art-form unto itself which has revitalized and redefined the contemporary quilt movement.

The next chapter explores in-depth the contemporary innovations in the sewing industry that have occurred as a consequence of the renewed interest in machine quilting. Sewing machines have been redesigned and restyled to accommodate the wants and needs of today’s machine quilters. The availability of these new sewing machines and
supplies has broadened the appeal of machine quilting and permitted the development of the machine-quilting services profession.
Notes


2 Ibid.


6 Brackman, 16.


8 Loscalzo, 182.

9 Brandon, 184.

10 Meyer, 47.


14 Ibid., 147.

16 Ibid.


19 Ibid., 51.

20 These results were obtained from a database query on the website, http://www.quiltstudy.org/discover/search.html, on predominant technique and the date range 1900-1940, accessed April 21, 2010.

21 McCall’s Needlework and Decorative Arts, Summer 1930, 63.


24 Ibid., 115.

25 Ibid., 120.


28 Ibid., 15

29 Ibid., 111-12.

30 Ernest B. Haight, Practical Machine-Quilting for the Homemaker (David City, NE: privately printed, 1974) 2.
I contacted Jean Ray Laury with the question that Elsa Brown, author of Creative Quilting is the same artist, Else Brown, whose work was featured in Laury’s Quilts & Coverlets: a Contemporary Approach. Laury’s reply was that, despite the different spellings of the first name, when Brown’s book was published, Laury had “never questioned but what it was the same person.” Jean Ray Laury, email message to author, May 13, 2010.


Ibid., 3.

Ibid.


Ibid., 2-3.

Ibid., 34-35.


Gutcheon, 195.

Fanning, 1.

Ibid., 188.

Ibid., 207.

Ibid., 187.


Ibid., 12.


50 Ibid., iv.


52 Linda Lasco, email to author, 13 November 2009.


CHAPTER III
INNOVATIONS IN THE SEWING INDUSTRY

As more and more quilters have embraced machine quilting, the sewing industry has responded by developing equipment and products to facilitate and augment the process. This chapter provides description of the contemporary styles of machine quilting to provide an understanding of the approaches used to produce the work. It also contains an overview of the specialized machine-quilting equipment, including explanations of the systems, and their features and configurations. A brief description of some of the many ancillary products, textiles, and educational activities which are developed specifically for machine quilters is also included in this chapter. It is important to understand the processes, equipment, and support available to all machine quilters – whether personal or Professional Machine Quilters (PMQs). The specialized machines, notions, and supplies are the means by which PMQs establish and operate their cottage industry offering contemporary professional machine-quilting services. This equipment has opened the door to the contemporary PMQs, the newest incarnation of people providing professional quilting services.¹

Contemporary Styles of Machine Quilting

Contemporary quilters perform machine quilting in two specific modes, both of which are accomplished on the machine in a unique way. The two modes of machine quilting are machine-guided quilting and free-motion quilting. Both of these modes have
their place in the world of quilting as each is associated with particular styles of quilting. Generally, machine-guided quilting is used for straight line quilting and free-motion quilting for curves and swirls. The equipment is an important factor in the preferred or desired style as the quilter will set up the machine differently or, in some cases, use a different machine altogether.

Machine-guided quilting is most often accomplished with the use of a standard sewing machine, set up in a standard way. As the quilt layers are fed under the needle, the presser foot bears down on the quilt sandwich from the top while the feed dog system below advances and controls the sandwich. The machine is thus guiding the sandwich and, as such, governs the length and location of each stitch. This control provided by the machine makes machine-guided quilting the preferred approach when quilting in long, straight lines. It is often applied to stitch-in-the-ditch style quilting in which lines of quilting are placed between the pieces of patchwork in a pieced quilt top design.

Free-motion quilting is the current term for the approach first labeled by the Fannings as free-machine quilting. To free-motion quilt, the feed-dog system on a standard machine is covered or dropped down, depending on the design of the specific machine, its use then eliminated. The only operative mechanism on the machine is the lock-stitch process of an upper thread meeting and entwining with a bobbin thread to create a stitch. The movement of the quilt sandwich is done entirely by the quilter maneuvering the sandwich under the needle along the bed of the machine. This movement dictates the location of the stitch and its length. Free-motion quilting is the preferred approach when quilting curved, swirled, and rounded quilting motifs as the quilter can easily guide the stitches in any and all directions.
Emergence of Specialized Machine-Quilting Equipment

The most significant product to be impacted by this interest in machine quilting is the sewing machine itself. The production of specialized machines for quilting and related machine-quilting notions and accessories is a relatively young sector of the overall sewing industry, having its inception in the early 1980s. In three decades, the manufacturers of this specialty equipment have altered machine-quilting practices, and, by fostering and promoting the services of the PMQs, they have, consequently, reshaped the contemporary quilt movement. While it has been very possible to machine quilt since the inception of sewing machines and most, if not all, modern machines will easily quilt any layered quilt sandwich, the newest quilting machines are styled with features designed to make machine quilting easier than ever before.

In the early 1980s, as machine quilting became accepted and appreciated, more people were attempting and struggling to quilt on general-purpose standard machines. That all changed with Ken Gammill of Gammill Quilting Systems, Inc. Possibly using as a model the Fannings’ suggestion to consider quilting with an industrial sewing head, Gammill claims to have made the first practical system, dedicated exclusively to machine quilting.² By mounting a high-speed, large-throat industrial sewing machine head on wheeled tracks, the head itself could move in any and all directions along the horizontal plane of the quilting area. Loading the individual layers of the quilt sandwich on poles, to proceed under the sewing machine head, eliminated the need for basting preparation of the quilt sandwich. This significantly reduced the quilting preparation work of the quilter. These two design factors on Gammill’s system were instrumental in launching an
entire sector of the sewing machine industry and also facilitated the development of an
entirely new cottage industry of professional machine-quilting services for the
contemporary quilt movement. With these machine-quilting systems, entrepreneurial
quilters resurrected the age-old custom of providing customized machine-quilting
services to quilters.³

The industrial sewing head adapted by Gammill does not have a feed-dog system
and so is perfectly suited for free-motion quilting. These industrial sewing heads are also
equipped with high-speed motors that easily withstand the rigors of long and continual
sewing. The other significant aspect of the industrial sewing head that piqued the interest
of serious quilters is the extended length of its bed opening or throat-depth. The bed
opening is the distance between the needle system on the left and the head support on the
right or the opening along the sewing machine bed. The depth of this opening is critical
for machine quilting. In order to quilt the very center of any quilt, the side edges need to
be rolled, inserted, and controlled within this opening. A typical king-size bed quilt is
approximately 120” square which, when half-rolled, results in considerable bulk to be
contained in the bed opening while quilting the center of the quilt. Thus, the greater the
throat-depth the easier it is to quilt larger quilts.

Mounting these industrial heads on a poled table frame system allows quilting by
moving the head over the quilt, rather than the quilt under the head. This has two
benefits to the quilter. First, the quilt does not have to be pre-basted in preparation for
the quilting process. Secondly, the struggle of handling and manipulating the quilt
sandwich is effectively minimized and, thus, the physical challenges of quilting a large
quilt are reduced. With a machine-quilting system perfectly suited to quilting in a timely
and profitable manner, the professional machine quilter is able to provide an affordable service that is desired and requested by contemporary quilters.

The sewing industry recognized their customers’ interest and willingness to invest in specialized machine-quilting equipment and it responded to this market demand. In the past thirty years, the specialized machine-quilting equipment industry has quickly expanded and evolved. Competitors to Gammill have emerged and thrived. Many standard-machine manufacturers have sought a claim in this new market and have engineered machines to meet the requirements and needs of the machine quilter. Consequently, specialized machine-quilting equipment with a variety of feature packages is produced and offered to quilters at several price-points, with an incredibly broad range to serve all machine quilters – the personal quilter, the casual quilter, and the professional full-time quilter.

Current Equipment Classifications

At this time, there are four categories or classifications of specialized machine-quilting equipment. This classification system is based on the size of the quilting-machine head as measured by its bed opening or throat-depth. The four machine classifications are domestic, short-arm, medium- or mid-arm, and long-arm. Standard home sewing machines are referred to as domestic machines. With a throat-depth of 6 to 7 inches, these include any and all machines manufactured and marketed for casual, home use. Short-arm machines, the second classification, have a throat-depth of approximately 9 inches and are popular with the hobbyist quilters, working primarily on their own quilts. Mid-arms, the third classification, are specialty quilting machines with a
throat-depth of 11 to 19 inches and are the choice of the serious quilters, some of whom may use these mid-arms for income-producing activities. Finally, the long-arm machines have throat-depths in excess of 20 inches and up to 36 inches, and are the preferred style of the committed quilters, many of whom are PMQs, actively pursuing customers for their machine-quilting service businesses.

While the long-arm machines are generally the purview of the professional machine quilters and the domestic, short-arms, and mid-arms are more often used by the personal and hobbyist quilters, there are exceptions to this generalization. Also, these classifications based on throat-depth can be ambiguous, inconsistent, and often overlapping since there are no industry set standards. Thus, machines that some people call a short-arm may be labeled a mid-arm by others. A throat-depth size referred to as a mid-arm by one company will be called a long-arm by another. There is disagreement, too, on the accepted spelling of these terms. Some people prefer hyphenated “long-arm” while others like the all-one-word term “longarm.” For these reasons, many industry leaders are suggesting use of the umbrella term “stand-up quilting machines,” referring to the posture employed by the quilters at the frames which support all sizes of machine heads. But even this term is invalidated by the sit-down models currently marketed by several vendors. At some point in the near future, nomenclature that now refers to the size of the quilting machine throat-depth may be considered obsolete. For purposes of this report, I will differentiate the equipment based on sewing machine throat-depth size and use the hyphenated labels.
Domestic Sewing Machines

The smallest machine, which is simply a standard machine designed for home use, is called a “domestic” machine within the industry. A domestic machine has a throat-depth between 6 and 7 inches. This broad category includes most standard sewing machines. Standard sewing machines have always been capable of machine quilting but are now often equipped with retractable feed-dogs and darning feet to facilitate free-motion quilting. Many also include an accessory called an even-feed foot that balances and “evens” the top and bottom pressure on the quilt sandwich during machine-guided quilting to ensure smooth quilting lines. Some manufacturers of domestic models also offer additional features specifically sought by quilters. For example, some models include computer-generated stippling stitches and hand-quilting-look stitches. Stitch-length control is a challenge when free-motion quilting and some domestic sewing machines feature an automatic stitch-regulator attachment. This stitch regulator uses laser technology to control the needle speed and hence the stitch length during free-motion quilting. The laser actually counts the fabric fibers as they pass under it and then coordinates the needle speed in ratio to the timing of the fiber movement. The result is consistent stitch length, a standard by which machine quilting is judged.

Short-Arm Machines

The second classification based on sewing machine throat-depth is called a “short-arm” machine. This is a machine with an elongated throat or bed opening between 8 and 10 inches. With throat-depths slightly longer than a domestic machine, they
provide additional bed space for the rolled quilt. These are very popular with the occasional or hobbyist quilter and currently cost between $1,000 and $2,000.

Within this classification there are two distinct styles of machines. The first is an elongated version of a standard machine. In recent years, many manufacturers have combined the high-end features of a computerized domestic model with the speed and throat space desired by machine quilters. With speeds of 1000 stitches per minute, hundreds of built-in computerized stitches with programmable sequencing, built-in thread cutters, and the elongated bed opening, these machines are marketed to the home sewer who wants to have it all – customizable sewing and effortless machine quilting. The second style of short-arm machines is an adaptation of a straight-stitch industrial machine, equipped with a high-speed, commercial-strength motor. With speeds reaching 1600 stitches per minute, a strong motor to tolerate extended running times, and a rigorous needle system, these machines are designed for the serious quilter (see Appendix B for complete list of short-arm models currently manufactured).

Professional-Caliber Equipment

Mid- and long-arm quilting machines are manufactured for quilting and only quilting. These are the preferred systems for PMQs and many hobbyists. These systems currently cost from $2,500 to $16,000 depending on the size of the head, the length of the table and frame, and the features included. Due to the exclusive nature of their application and the high cost of the equipment, these classifications of quilting systems fall into a combined category of professional-caliber equipment.
These deep-throated sewing heads were originally constructed for industrial applications, such as boot-making, and the initial designs did not include a support or frame device because that was customized for the particular production process for which the head would be used. The contemporary table and frame machine-quilting support systems are based on Ken Gammill’s original 1980 design. The modern quilting system currently includes a quilting head mounted perpendicular to the poled table and attached a handle to the short side by the needle mechanism.

With bed openings from 11 to 19 inches deep and an elevated machine cross bar height, the “mid-arm” machines provide even more quilting advantages than a short-arm. The increased quilting area allows more quilting time before the quilt sandwich must be repositioned. Mid-arms are very popular with the serious hobbyist who wants to utilize the features and convenience of long-arm systems without making as significant a financial investment as would be required to purchase a larger system. Currently, there are over a dozen mid-arm models marketed by several manufacturers.

The long-arm quilting machines have throat space with depth ranges of 20 to 36 inches and heights from 8 to 12 inches (see figure 3.1). Since these machine heads are hand-guided, their weight is an issue. Most are constructed of aluminum, either cast or extruded, for its light weight and strength. Because these are still lock-stitch machines, there must be a top thread and a bottom thread to form a stitch. So these systems utilize class M sized bobbins to maximize the loaded amount of bobbin thread and they are equipped with on-board bobbin winders that wind a fresh bobbin simultaneous with the quilting process. The quilting heads use a variety of feet which are similar to the darning feet standard on domestic machines. The styles include a circular frame which is called a
Figure 3.1. American Professional Quilting Systems Millennium. The APQS Millennium is a long-arm with a 26” throat depth. Source: www.apqs.com.
“hopping” foot and an open-toed foot for better visibility of needle position. These feet compress the layers of the quilt as the needle enters to provide the resistance needed for the needle to penetrate deeply enough to meet the hook of the bobbin mechanism.

Manufacturers also conveniently size the feet so their circumference indicates a ⅛” or ¼” distance from the needle. This helps the quilters space their quilting consistently from either other quilting lines or from the margins of the appliqué or piecework.

On both the mid- and long-arm systems, the quilter usually faces the front or short end of the quilting head at the needle side of the head. Two handles are mounted at this front end, positioned ergonomically, with which the quilter steers the head. Often machine controls are installed along the handles for easy access. Many companies provide two sets of handles on both the front and back short ends of the head to allow for maximum flexibility in the operator’s position while quilting. A recent development is smaller additional handles, often referred to as micro handles, that attach closer to the needle mechanism and curve down very low so the quilter’s hands can get very close to the quilt top to produce ultra-fine, very specifically placed stitching. Other convenience features offered on many mid- and long-arms are speed control mechanisms and a needle up/needle down setting to control where the needle rests when the machine is stopped (see Appendix C and D for complete listings of the mid- and long-arm models available and Appendix E for a source list for the equipment manufacturers).
Features of Professional-Caliber Equipment

When free-motion quilting, two of the biggest challenges are placing the stitch precisely where it needs to be and regulating the consistency of each stitch’s length. Two recent technological developments for these systems help overcome these challenges by controlling the movement of the quilting head and, thus, the placement of the stitching, both for stitch-length and the position or design. The first development is a stitch regulator which controls how long each stitch is and the second technological improvement is computerized quilting which will quilt any design motif, any place on the quilt, with no help from the quilter beyond positioning and initiating.

Stitch regulators were revolutionary in the early 1990s and now they are standard equipment for many vendors, especially on systems at the top of the product line. Most of the long-arm systems and many of the mid-arms come with a stitch regulator system, but these operate somewhat differently than the laser system discussed previously with the domestic sewing machines. In the mid- and long-arm systems, timing mechanisms connect and correlate the quilting head movement to the needle movement thus controlling the stitch length. For example, in the Gammill’s stitch regulation system, a small wheel rests on a head-carriage wheel to monitor the movement of the head which, in turn, is electronically connected to the needle shaft to correlate the up-down movement of the needle to the movement of the carriage, thus determining the stitch length. As the quilter slows the head, the needle slows correspondingly. Because consistent stitch length is a standard of quality against which machine quilting is judged, a stitch regulator can be a significant aid to the quilter.
The second technological innovation takes control of the quilting head a step further than the stitch regulators. Computerized quilting systems use robotic-style technology to interface the head carriage to a personal computer, which controls the entire quilting process, including stitch length and quilting motif, by directing the movement of the quilt head and the placement of each stitch. These Computer-Aided Design (CAD) systems are sophisticated interactions of software, hardware, and quilting machine. Software on the computer allows the quilter to use any scanned or drawn image as a design motif to quilt on the quilt top. The images can be sized, rotated, and flipped to precisely coincide with the appropriate quilting space. Laser pointers act as registration devices to position the motif. Once design and placement decisions are made by the quilter, the system takes over and perfectly quilts the motif. Many of the manufacturers offer a computerized system as an option with their quilting machine. There are also companies, including PC Quilter, CompuQuilter, and Intelliquilter, that produce add-on systems that can be purchased separately and used as adjuncts to other quilting machines. The quality of the quilting produced and the increased efficiency for the quilter are considerable but these benefits come at a high cost. Currently, these computerized control systems will add anywhere from $2,500 to $15,000 to the overall cost of the quilting system. The price for the computerized systems depends on multiple factors including the software, hardware, and quantity of motifs included in the package purchased.
Table and Frame Systems

The machine-quilting head is not a complete quilting system without the inclusion of a table and frame which allow the quilting head to move while the quilt itself is stationary. Most of the professional-caliber frames use a four-pole system with three poles holding the three components of the quilt sandwich as they feed under the machine needle to be quilted, while the fourth pole holds the finished quilt. It is here that the bed opening height of the quilting head is a function of quilting convenience as this fourth pole resides within the bed opening, taking up the finished quilt. The space available within the bed opening controls the size of the quilt that can be adequately quilted on a system and it also dictates the type of batting that may be used. Depending on the perimeter size of the quilt and the thickness of the batting, the roll on the fourth pole may become too thick to be quilted on any one machine. The pole length dictates the longest quilt dimension that can be accessed without rotating the quilt. Poles come in a wide variety of materials including wood, aluminum, and steel and are available up to 14 feet long to accommodate a king-size quilt. Attached to the poles are fabric leaders of either canvas or muslin onto which the quilt components are pinned. Many quilters also attach zippers to the leaders to facilitate both proper and consistent alignment of the quilt components while also allowing the quilt to be easily removed and reloaded during the quilting process.

The heights of all of the tables are adjustable. The system of height adjustment varies from nuts and bolts set in holes in the table legs to sophisticated hydraulic lift systems. The surveyed quilters who invested in the hydraulic systems found them easy
and well worth the additional investment. Many frames come equipped with overhead light banks to facilitate the examination of the quilting in progress.

These frame systems also feature a horizontal platform on a wheeled carriage and trolley system to which the quilting head is attached. This carriage platform, as it is called, moves above the pole-mounted, stationary quilt. It travels left-to-right or horizontally along the table rails and also vertically forward-and-back across the table. This simultaneous bi-directional movement allows full range of machine-head positioning while free-motion quilting.

To avoid interruptions from starts and stops, quilting patterns for machine quilting are designed to be one continuous line so the quilter can complete the entire motif with one continual swing of the quilting head. Along the table of this frame there is an area on which to place a continuous line pattern. These continuous line patterns for the frames are called pantographs and they are specifically sized to correspond with the quilting space available for the head-frame combination. Each panto (as these are called by the users) is as wide as the quilting depth and as long as the table length. A metal or laser stylus is attached to the side of the carriage frame and is used to trace the pattern, thereby moving the head to produce the panto pattern in stitching on the quilt. The pantos come in a myriad of styles and designs and are a very popular approach to what PMQs call allover or edge-to-edge quilting, a form of free-motion quilting that covers the quilt with a decorative motif. While they are often simply made of rolled paper printed with the design motif, several companies produce them in ¼” wood or plastic, with a groove in which to insert the stylus, helping the quilter control the head even more. Many
manufacturers also offer guide rulers and pivot systems to help the quilter produce specific styles of quilting designs.

The primary feature on these quilting systems, a machine head with full-range of motion, facilitates a curved motif. This easily moved head, however, also makes quilting in straight lines a challenge. When straight-line quilting, the goal is keeping the lines straight and to do so requires meticulous control with these quilting heads that glide so easily. Stitch-in-the-ditch straight line quilting is sewn in the ditch created at the seam of two patchwork pieces and is a very popular style of machine quilting. Control is imperative since the quality of stitch-in-the-ditch work is evaluated based on how accurately the stitching remains in the ditch.

To achieve this level of precision control, manufacturers include channel locks on the system to lock the quilting head in position so it will not float. Horizontal channel locks will fasten the head to the carriage frame to stop vertical movement; the quilting head can then only move left-to-right. This facilitates sewing straight lines parallel to the frame poles. Quilters also use the horizontal channel lock as a guideline to mount and square up the individual layers of the quilt. Vertical channel locks fasten the head to the table frame so the head will only move vertically, back-to-front to make perfectly straight lines. Both sets of channel locks can be used in conjunction to produce precise perpendicular gridded quilting lines.

Ancillary Products and Support

The growth, development, and innovations in the machine-quilting sector of the sewing industry have influenced more than just the sewing machines themselves. Over
the course of these past three decades, there has been an abundance of accessories, notions, and textiles developed and marketed that are inextricably linked to machine quilting, on both a personal and a professional level. Notions, such as machine-quilting gloves and silicon mats, help machine quilters maneuver their quilts more easily. Add-on equipment, such as bobbin winders, micro handles, extended bases, and spindle expanders are marketed to facilitate the process on specialized quilting systems.

Templates, pattern transfers, marking tools, and specific-use rulers enable marking ease. Adjustable stools and chairs and foam underfoot comfort pads are sold to relieve the stress of long periods of quilting. The textile manufacturers have noticed the popularity of machine quilting and have responded with batting, fabric, and thread developed to meet the needs of the machine quilters (see Appendix F for a source list for notions and supplies vendors).

Books, magazines, educational events, and conventions are geared specifically to the machine quilters to aid and augment their quilting activities. Pattern and design books are authored by the celebrities of machine quilting who share their ideas, styles, and techniques. There is also an abundance of books specifically published for and by PMQs with topics ranging from how to buy and run a system to how to form a business. A magazine entirely devoted to machine quilting, *Unlimited Possibilities*, is very popular among aficionados. National conventions with vendors, classes, contests, and networking opportunities for all machine quilters, not just the PMQs, are conducted in many parts of the country. “Quilting with Machines: a Learning Experience” in Sawmill Creek, Ohio, is in its third year.5 “Innovations” in Tacoma, Washington, was founded by Cindy Roth of longarmuniversity.com, dedicated to machine quilting in all formats.6 The
International Machine Quilter’s Association, Inc. (IMQA) is a machine quilters’ trade organization which conducts the “Machine Quilters Showcase” every year in Overland Park, Kansas. At the 2010 annual Home Machine Quilting Show in Salt Lake City, Utah, five thousand visitors boosted the attendance 25 percent over the previous year. Janet-Lee Santeusanio and Mary Schilke conducted the first Machine Quilters Exposition (MQX) in 2000 with a group of forty women. In 2010, there were almost 4500 attendees in Providence, Rhode Island. This convention is so popular that for Fall 2011, Santeusanio and Schilke are adding a second event on the west coast in Portland, Oregon.

The growth, development, and innovations in the machine-quilting sector of the sewing industry in thirty years are significant. The acceptance and popularity of machine quilting coupled with the proliferation of specialized quilting equipment and technology made the rise of the professional machine-quilting industry possible. By producing the equipment to facilitate the process, the manufacturers entered into a relationship with the PMQs to provide services that satisfied the desires of the quiltmakers. This symbiotic relationship between manufacturer and the PMQs and their customers has changed the contemporary quilt movement in ways that no one had imagined. Inspired by her great-great-grandmother who machine quilted in the early 1900s, National Quilting Association master quilter, Diane Gaudynski summed up the contemporary attitude of many quilters toward machine quilting:

We are at an amazing place in the history of quilting. We now have the tools, the skills, and the acceptance in the world of quilting to make a great top that is pieced, appliquéd, painted, wholecloth, pictorial, or whatever our hearts, minds, and hands can imagine and create, and we can machine quilt it and make it even better. It is a heady thought for many of us who began to machine quilt when it
was not accepted in traditional work. Most of us saved machine quilting for quilt
tops we were not afraid to ruin. Machine quilting on traditional quilts was the
black sheep of the quilting family, and now it has become something to admire, to
respect for the skill required and its beauty, and to embrace with the knowledge
that is it not second best but incredible in its own right.\textsuperscript{10}

The next chapter tells the stories of many PMQs in their own words. It outlines
how and why they started a professional machine-quilting services business, how they
structure their business from marketing to coping with competition, the aspects of it that
they enjoy the most, and the changes they have seen and foresee for the future of machine
quilting.
Notes

1 See Chapter IV for details of the history of professional quilting services.

2 See page 31 of Chapter II.


7 IMQA, “IMQA,” imqa.org/Index.htm (accessed May 10, 2010).


CHAPTER IV
PROFESSIONAL MACHINE QUILTERS

The Professional Machine Quilters (PMQs) of the contemporary quilt movement did not invent the quilting services industry but they have taken it to a new level. In order for this industry to exist and thrive in the contemporary quilting movement, two proscriptive attitudes of the early stages of the quilt revival had to be changed within the community. The first attitude to be changed was that the most acceptable way to finish a quilt was with hand-quilting. Chapter II describes the evolution of the new attitudes toward machine quilting as the late-twentieth-century quilt revival became a full-blown movement. The second attitude that needed to change was the strong belief that all of the work performed on the quilt be that of the quilter and the quilter only. Only when collaboration in the final quilted product became an acceptable option did the professional machine-quilting industry take off.

The practice of collaboration in quiltmaking has historical roots. There is a long tradition of professional quilting services with quilters performing the quilting process in exchange for some type of financial remuneration in the form of money, goods, or even housing. In the British Isles, where quiltmaking flourished, documented as early as the mid-eighteenth century, there were specialized, paid quilters who made petticoats and bed quilts as part of a quilting services cottage industry. The quilting profession there was divided into village quilters whose skills were practiced as a sideline to dressmaking;
the itinerant quilters who travelled from town to town and farm to farm, often with their frames in tow; quilt clubs in mining communities which provided a type of installment system for paying the quilters for their services; and “stampers” who marked quilts for a fee, but did not stitch the quilting. The income received for these skilled services was less than that of a farm laborer but, still, numerous people earned a living through their quilting. One reportedly ambidextrous Welsh quilter, Mary Jones, performed her services in the mid-nineteenth century in a primitive cottage by the light of a single-paned window. Jones, with the help of an apprentice, could quilt two quilts a week for the fee of four to six shillings each which is the equivalent of $35 in 2008 dollars.¹

The quilting cottage industry was not limited to the British Isles or to a specific timeframe in quilt history. Evidence that it was on-going and widespread can be gleaned by the instructions and recommendations given to quiltmakers as the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century revival began. Sybil Lanigan, in the October 1894 *Ladies Home Journal*, concluded her advice on ways to finish a quilt by suggesting that “the best is to find some skillful, old-fashioned sewing woman who will take your dainty, bright patchwork, line it, quilt it in delicate, fine tracery, and bind it for as moderate a sum as the making of a print dress.”² In her 1915 book, *Quilts; Their Story and How to Make Them*, Marie Webster provided detailed instructions on quilting even going so far as to describe how to construct the requisite frame. Suddenly, without any previous reference to hiring a quilter to finish a top, she commented:

However, for the consolation of those who consider quilting a wicked waste of time, it may be added that nowadays expert quilters are very few indeed, and enthusiasts who have spent weeks piecing a beautiful quilts have been known to wait a year before being able to get it quilted by an expert in this art.³
Webster continued to provide very thorough, step-by-step quilting instructions about stitch length, and thread, and even quilting posture. Then abruptly, she wrote:

Quilting is usually paid for by the amount of thread used, no consideration being given to the amount of time expended on the work. . . . The price charged is more a matter of locality than excellence of workmanship. . . . When many of the old quilts, now treasured as remembrances of our diligent and ambitious ancestors, were made, one dollar per spool was the usual price paid for quilting. However, as the number of quilters has decreased, the price of quilting has increased, until as much as five dollars per spool is now asked in some parts of the country. Even at the advanced prices, it is exceedingly difficult to find sufficient quilters to complete the many pieced and appliquéd quilts being made.  

The matter-of-fact way that Webster interjected paying someone to do the quilting indicates that it was a common and very well-accepted practice in 1915. Webster’s reference to a former pricing structure seemingly suggests, too, that quilting services had been hired out for an extended period of time.

In the later stages of the early twentieth-century quilt revival, Carrie Hall and Rose Kretsinger, in their 1935 book *The Romance of the Patchwork Quilt in America*, did not equivocate when they suggested that their readers, upon completion of their quilt tops, should “turn it over to an experienced quilter, for a beautiful quilt may be made or marred by the quilting.” In her 1929 book *Old Patchwork Quilts and The Women Who Made Them*, Ruth Finley emphasized this same advice to find an expert to perform the quilting and explained further the reasons for doing so:

Quilting was an accomplishment into which went not only technique but feeling. It is this branch of the art that may possibly prevent quiltmaking becoming a universal occupation again. This modern demand for patchwork, so typically accessory to American period furnishings, has revived the art to an extent: not few women of today are reproducing with their own hands the old pieced and appliquéd quilt patterns. But in rare instances do they themselves quilt the tops thus constructed. . . [t]he new tops are generally turned over to the specialists. And here the woman of seventy – if she learned to quilt in her youth, and generally she did – has come into her own. The cunning of her fingers is in
demand, not only for the work she herself can accomplish, but to teach younger persons. In small towns and rural communities groups of women, sometimes working for personal compensation, but more often for charitable or other social ends, are quilting today – both for individuals who have pieced one or two quilt tops for their own homes and for the great metropolitan shops and decorators catering to the latest fancies of wealth.  

Finley’s words still ring true and are wholly applicable to the contemporary quilt movement.

The established practice of hiring quilting services was so widespread, in fact, that Margaret Caden, who along with her sisters operated a gift store in Lexington, Kentucky, had no compunction when she hired four quilters to construct and quilt her entry to the 1933 Sears National Quilt Contest, despite a rule stating that the entry was to be made entirely by the entrant. When Caden claimed in its entirety the grand prize of $1000 that it won, none of the actual stitchers voiced any objections. Caden was not alone in her use of quilting services in her submission. Of fourteen entrants who survived into the 1970s, five admitted to having paid quilters to complete their tops.

As the second quilt revival of the twentieth century began in the late 1960s and early 1970s, many social and cultural movements impacted and shaped the attitudes, motivations, and methodologies of quiltmakers. Colonial Revivalism emphasized nationalism, patriotism, and independence; the back-to-nature movement emphasized simplicity, purity, and naturalism; the hippie movement emphasized self-expression, individualism, and creativity. The conflux of these influences significantly impacted two aspects of quiltmaking at this time – the method of the quilting and the option of hiring out some part of one’s quilting project. Quilting by hand was considered authentic and true to ancestral ideals and practices leading many quiltmakers to feel compelled to hand-
quilt in the iconic manner of their ancestors. Most quilters also sought to perform each of the quilting processes independently. To fulfill the values of individual creativity and self-expression, each quiltmaker strove to produce the entire quilt from cutting to quilting.

As the quilting movement picked up steam, quilters who were inundated with new fabrics, more patterns, and intriguing designs, realized the basis of the saying – “so many quilts, so little time.” Without collaboration and delegation of some part of the process, as suggested by Radka Donnell in the Fannings’ 1980 book, they could never finish all the quilts dancing in their imaginations. They began to shift back towards employing professional quilters to perform the actual quilting process. Combining the acceptance and appreciation of machine quilting, the new options in quilting machine technology that became available to the quilters in the 1980s and 90s, and the willingness to collaborate within the quilting community, some entrepreneurial quilters reestablished a cottage industry, performing quilting services for those who made the quilt tops but who were not able or interested in quilting the quilt. This cottage industry of Professional Machine Quilters (PMQs) began to flourish and expand.

Currently, the machine-quilting services industry is thriving and its members are industrious, progressive, and technically savvy. The community is making significant contributions to the contemporary world of quilting – in process, product, and attitude. Thus, it warrants investigation and documentation. It was to this end that this research was initiated. The online survey, as described in Chapter I, received responses from 285 PMQs from the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and France.
Their responses provide a glimpse into the activities of this quiltmaking sub-group and reveal the depth and significance of their contributions to the quiltmaking movement.

Professional Machine Quilters Survey Results Overview

Of the 285 PMQs who responded to the online survey, 272 are located in forty-five of the United States, six are from Canada, five from Australia, one from New Zealand, and one from France. In 2008, at the time of the survey, 8 percent (23) reported being PMQs less than one year; 52 percent (149) had been PMQs one to five years; and 40 percent (113) had been in the field for over five years (see figure 4.1). For professional services rendered, 90 percent (257) of the respondents used a long-arm style system; 7 percent (20) used a mid-arm; 3 percent (9) used a short-arm; and 5 percent (14) used a domestic sewing machine (see figure 4.2). When asked how many quilts to-date that they had quilted for financial remuneration, 16 percent (46) had quilted fewer than twenty; 10 percent (27) had quilted twenty to forty quilts; 8 percent (24) had quilted between forty-one and sixty quilts; and 66 percent (188) of the reporting PMQs had quilted over sixty quilts during the course of their career (see figure 4.3). For monthly production, 32 percent (92) of the PMQs report fewer than four quilts a month; while 41 percent (116) quilt four to ten quilts per month; 18 percent (52) of the PMQs quilt eleven to twenty quilts per month; and 9 percent (25) quilt over twenty per month (see figure 4.4). Generally, PMQs practice their profession in a part-time manner with 32 percent (92) working less than fifteen hours per week; 45 percent (128) working sixteen to thirty hours per week; and 23 percent (65) quilting for over thirty hours per week (see figure 4.5).
Figure 4.1. Length of Professional Machine Quilting Business. This pie chart illustrates how long the survey respondents had been machine quilting professionally.
Figure 4.2. Machine Quilting Systems used by PMQs. This bar chart represents the quilting systems used by the respondent PMQs.
Figure 4.3. PMQ Career Quilt Count. This pie chart illustrates the number of quilts professionally quilted over the course of the professional machine quilter’s career.
Figure 4.4. PMQ Monthly Quilt Production. This pie chart illustrates the number of quilts professionally quilted each month by the respondent PMQs.
Figure 4.5. PMQ Hours Worked Per Week. This pie chart illustrates the number of hours worked each week by the PMQ survey respondents.
Motivations

Within the survey, the respondents were asked in an open-ended question to describe their motivations for starting a professional machine-quilting business. In their own words, they explained how and why they initiated their businesses. The motivations reported for initiating a professional machine-quilting business fall into three general themes with many quilters relating multiple and overlapping reasons. The motivational thematic classifications include love of the craft of quilting and its community members; income generation; and personal motivations. Within the themes of income generation and personal motivations, the survey responses were also further classified into several sub-themes (see figure 4.6).

Love of the Craft and its Community Motivations

The single largest sub-theme motivator related through this survey is the love of the craft of quilting, quilts themselves, or the community of quiltmakers with 40 percent (115) of respondents citing this incentive. Jo Baner\(^1\) of Washington explained “machine quilting is my passion. It is what I really like to do and to get paid for it was a dream come true. I love being able to finish quilts for others especially when they find it so hard to do. I am happy to do that for them.”\(^1\) Cathy Kirk of North Carolina responded “I love quilts and quilting. I believe quilting makes the quilt, and I wanted to have a career doing something that I really enjoy.”\(^1\) Seeking a creative outlet through quilting was one of the primary motivators for Robin Irvine of Texas who elaborated, “I love creating quilts so it was just a natural progression to move on into longarm quilting to finish the
Figure 4.6. Business Initiation Motives. This bar chart illustrates the motives reported by PMQ’s for initiating their home-based business. The blue bar illustrates the response the theme of love of the craft of quilting and its community members; the green bars represent the theme of income generation; and the red bars represent the theme of personal motivations.
quilt tops. I really enjoy longarm quilting and enhancing the quilts that my customers make. I just help their quilts to look even better.”14 Tracie Munds of Idaho related how important doing that which she loves is in her life. She explained in the survey that “doing what I love is really a ministry to me, my family, and the people around me, and that is what I should do. So, this year 2008, I decided to do what it is I love and earn an income doing it.”15 Marla Work of Ohio is affected when “the results ofquilting to a customer that makes them so happy they cry.” She enjoys “doing a job that makes someone’s life special and happier than the day before. [It is] something of myself in others that says you did it right.”16 Beth Durand of Oregon explained that she loves the entire process of quiltmaking and “[f]inding that others are willing to pay me for something I enjoy this much was just an added bonus.”17

Income Motivations

Quilting services is a business and, as such, is performed to generate some level of income for the PMQs. The income sub-themes were cited overall as motivators by 66 percent (188) of the respondents. Thirteen percent (38) of the survey respondents were seeking full-time employment while 35 percent (101) of the PMQ respondents reported the goal of supplemental income. Eleven percent (32) stated that they wanted or needed to recoup the financial outlay for the equipment. Janice Kiser of Ohio has been a PMQ for over five years and started because she “had to find a home based business that would generate enough income . . . to help in [her] share of the household bills.” Kiser said, “My sister said I would never make any money quilting by hand. She talked me into buying the machine.”18 Nancy Gambrel of Illinois, also a long-time PMQ, responded,
“The kids were flying the coop and my husband encouraged me to do something to stay busy and help with the income. I love being home and I love quilts so it has been a perfect fit!”

Looking for a retirement job was the goal of Sharon Roos of Minnesota. She commented, “After doing over 50 quilts for friends and relatives, retiring from a very busy day job, and moving two states away, I decided to segue this into a part time job I'd enjoy in retirement years. I love the creativity long armquilting gives me.” Erin Underwood from Maryland admitted to having a quilting “obsession.” She stated that she loves to make quilts and the “the only way to justify the cost was to go into business.”

Citing many overlapping motivations, Sheila from Washington remarked:

I wanted to get a longarm machine as I wanted to quilt my own quilts. I love all the parts of quilting and was tired of letting someone else have the fun of quilting my quilt tops. A longarm is an expensive piece of equipment and so I decided to pay for it by quilting for others. Plus it is nice to make money doing something I love to do.

Not all the respondents were female and many spouses are directly involved in the business. Kelley Jones spoke for many of his fellow PMQs in his goal to help pay for the investment. He said:

First, I am a male quilter. I am a husband who almost divorced his wife over her quilting obsession. That said, I wanted to save our marriage. So the old "Can't beat 'em join 'em" adage applies. Also, the concept of letting a toy pay for itself was attractive. Long arms are expensive and the cost had to be justified.

Georgia Stull of Missouri related the story of establishing her service business with the encouragement and support of her husband. She said:

One day I took a quilt I had pieced as a gift for my oldest son getting married to a longarmer. My husband went with me. I was very interested in the machine. As we left my husband said to me "You could do that!" Two weeks later my husband came home from work early and said, "We are going to MQS (Machine Quilter's Showcase in Overland Park, KS) and buy you a longarm!" Wow! We looked at different brands over the next few months. Ivan's work is technology
based and he was very impressed. . . . In August 2006 we ordered our machine and "SuzyQ" arrived on September 26, 2006. My husband is also learning to quilt!!! We hope to pay off the machine and have a great client base built before he retires. We then have a flexible business to provide additional income for us!!

Carol Lyon’s husband also got involved to help grow her business. She reported:

I was too cheap to pay someone else to do the quilting. I then discovered how much fun it was. My husband played on the machine one day while I was at work. He enjoyed it also so took up quilting full time. He helped build the business and I finally quit my job to quilt full time.

Six percent (17) of the survey respondents are in a relationship with a quilt shop, either as the owner or as an employee. Rita Fishel of Ohio owns a full-line quilt shop and its primary mission is customer satisfaction. Providing quilting services was a “simple” solution for her customers who needed someone to quilt all their class quilts. Cheryl Isbell and her husband own a quilt shop in Texas. In describing her foray into quilting services, Isabell said:

We own a quilt shop and I was sending my quilts out – was very unhappy with the quality of quilting. My husband said I could do it. [He] bought me a second hand machine – sat in the back area of shop for a month and wasn’t turned on. [I] finally worked up the nerve to turn it on – practiced for three hours – put on a quilt and been hooked ever since. [The] reason I say this is because I have been a hand quilter for 40 some years – I have some artistic talent and have been sewing and quilting since my early teens. I have a passion for this art.

Personal Motivations

A professional machine-quilting business is primarily an individually-owned, home-based business that is highly personal. The personal motivations sub-themes were cited overall as incentive by 62 percent (176) of the respondents. Several PMQs reported initially purchasing the equipment with no intention of actually going into business and quilting for someone else. Receiving remuneration for their quilting services was
secondary to their personal quilting endeavors. Thirty-three percent (94) of PMQs got their start after purchasing the equipment to quilt their personal top collection and 11 percent (31) reported that their business was a consequence of requests made for them to quilt for others. Janet Joehlin of Ohio is an example of being thrust into a somewhat accidental profession. She explained:

My kids were in high school, the empty nest was approaching, my passion for quilting, I had over 20 quilt tops laying around and I knew I would never hand quilt again. All that led me to buy a machine and I spent 3 or so years working on my own things and then decided to quilt a bit for others, which led me to a part time quilting business.28

Marlin Williams’ story about how her business began echoes the same comments made by Marie Webster in 1915 that the wait for expert quilting services can be interminable. The need for a quick turn-around and the desire for specialized quilting designs led Williams to invest in professional-caliber equipment and, in turn, that led to a quilting services business. In her survey response, she related:

I used 4 long arm quilters and the wait time was 3 to 9 months. I found I made my quilt tops much too fast. I also wanted somewhat of a say to the quilting design on special quilts. Only one of my quilters worked with me on design requests. And only that one quilter did custom quilting. As an instructor for a quilt shop I could not get my samples back fast enough. I needed to do something to help myself in teaching at first. I started feeling like hey I know I can do that, started researching at shows and online. Went to a seminar and made my decision. I know I still have growth potential, and I practice a lot. I started quilting for my students from quilt workshops and friends from my friendship group. Started off from that point.29

For Linda Jordan of Mississippi, the wish to finish her own work led to a source of supplemental income for her husband. She reported, “When I bought my machine, it was to quilt MY quilts. DH [dear husband] thought this would be a good supplemental income when he retires. So we formed our business & started taking customer quilts. DH
does the quilting while I make quilts.”30 Faith Horsky of California also started a quilting services business at the urging of her friends. She said:

Someone gave me an old machine that had been sitting in their garage. My husband had just died; I couldn't drive due to health issues so sold my car. She said I had the room in my garage and she didn't. It saved my mental health. I had no intention of starting a business, but people just kept asking me to do their quilts. The old machine never worked well so ended up buying a [longarm].31

The desire to have a home-based business was the motivation cited by 13 percent (36) of the respondents. 5 percent (15) related that they needed the flexible hours that being their own boss allowed. Heather Shanks of Queensland, Australia, had to retire from her previous profession due to medical reasons so she set up her quilting business in her home and quilts any time of the day or night.32 Wanting to be at home and working at her convenience was also the goal of Carol Edgerly of Oregon.33 Samantha McKie of New York stated:

I knew I didn't want to [return to the working world after the birth of my son]. . . . I started researching machines and decided with [a midarm] it might be possible to earn money doing what I love to do – quilt – at home. I got my machine in December of 2006, started getting paid in March of 2007, and now in July of 2008 I am booking in January of 2009!34

Mary Jo Yackley of Texas found quilting in a home-based business as a solution to her need for flexible scheduling. She explained, “I had 2 children in different private schools (therefore, no buses) and needed flexibility in work scheduling. It has met all those requirements and been successful and rewarding.”35 Connie Rice from Ohio had several motivations for initiating her business along with her need for flexibility. She elaborated:

I am a retired R.N. and I wanted to do something in my retirement years that would be fun and flexible while offering me a chance to interact with people and be creative. I need to be challenged and continuing to learn about the new
techniques is a bonus to challenging myself. Plus I love other quilters. They are all so friendly and willing to share their time and knowledge.  

PMQs have entered this industry for a myriad of multi-layered and multi-faceted motivations that range from social-cultural to financial to artistic reasons. Consequently, ascertaining a solitary motivation in any individual may not be feasible as the results of this survey indicate. The motivators are as varied, overlapping, and significant as the work performed, the product of the work, and the PMQs themselves. The next section disseminates the various structures of the businesses the PMQs have developed in this industry.

Business Structure

Just as all PMQs initiated their businesses for unique, personal reasons, so, too, are the approaches, structures, and configurations of their businesses. As this is a nascent cottage industry using modern equipment, there are no long-established business models to guide the PMQ in marketing, pricing, profitability, or managing competition. As discussed in the previous chapter, there are several books, magazines, online resources, conventions, and courses available which provide advice and support to the PMQs. Ultimately, however, the business is their own, operated within their personal desires, parameters, and dictates. Each PMQ has to find how to structure a profitable enterprise that attracts and maintains a customer base while allowing the PMQ to perform according to her skill-sets and preferences within her specific constraints. This section describes aspects of their business structures as reported by the PMQs in the survey.

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Marketing Techniques

One of the initial decisions required by the PMQs is what avenues or techniques will be implemented to market their services and solicit new customers. In the survey, PMQs were asked a multi-option variable question coupled with an open-ended option, to describe the marketing techniques that they employ. The response variables offered were: the newspapers/magazines, email newsletter, presentations/exhibits, direct mail, guild newsletter, word-of-mouth, and the open-ended option of other.

Based on the pre-set options offered in the survey question, the predominant marketing technique employed is, overwhelmingly, word-of-mouth with 97 percent (276) of the PMQs citing it. This was followed by presentations/exhibits with a 26 percent (74) citation which, in turn, was closely followed by 23 percent (65) reporting the use of guild newsletters. Very few PMQs reported using newspapers/magazines, email newsletters, or direct mail (see figure 4.7). Evaluation of the open-ended responses revealed two marketing mechanisms which should have been included in the pre-set options section of the survey due to the high incidence of citation: the use of a business website and the offering of cards and information through local quilt shops. In the initial survey, 18 percent (52) of PMQs cited a relationship with a local quilt shop as a marketing technique, whether through business cards displayed or through referrals. The employment of a business website was mentioned leading to a follow-up email to the original respondents to ascertain how many PMQs have or plan to have business website; 16 percent (47) responded that they do. Other marketing techniques included participating in quilt shows, quilting samples either for a designer or a local quilt shop, and posting on a variety of quilting discussion websites.
Figure 4.7. PMQ Marketing Techniques. This bar chart illustrates the survey responses by PMQs regarding the marketing techniques that they employ.
Marketing, promotions, and advertising are the means by which all businesses make contact and communicate with their customer base. Almost all respondent PMQs regard word-of-mouth as an integral marketing technique. This is not a surprise since their businesses are based on a direct relationship with customers. Not only are the PMQs providing a service in their labor of quilting, they are deeply involved with their customers’ personal quiltmaking. The contribution the PMQs make to their customers’ quilts may be related back to the communities in which the quilters belong. The reputation of the PMQ will spread quickly, whether good or bad, and this reputation will make or break their businesses. The livelihoods of the PMQs depend, not only on the quality of their work, but also on their relationships with the customers of their services. The importance of this relationship will be supported in the customer survey results in Chapter V of this thesis.

Participation and marketing within the quiltmaking community are achieved in a variety of ways. Presentations and exhibits were cited by 26 percent (74) of the PMQs which indicates that they value the display of their work in promoting their businesses. Quilt shows often will provide the name of both the quiltmaker and the quilter on the quilt labels, giving credit to each contributor to the piece. While this is a fairly recent practice and not yet fully universal, many PMQs commented that this is a significant support to their endeavors. PMQs also value their access to local, regional, and state quilt guilds and 23 percent (65) noted marketing through guild newsletters. PMQs work closely with their local quilt shops which provided referrals and locations to display their work.
In the contemporary online world, the presumption is that in order to effectively conduct any business, the purveyors need a website. The use of a business website, however, was cited by only 16 percent (47) of the PMQs; this includes both the responses in the online survey plus the follow-up email. Currently, PMQs do not believe that the time and money invested is worth the minimal return. Allison Bayer of Texas related her experiences in a recent email to the author. She stated:

After much pressure from fellow longarm quilters and customers in the past year (mind you I've been doing great without it since 1997!!) I tried to set up my own through GoDaddy.com -- what a fiasco!! I have budgeted to have a professional do my website in 2010. I want to teach and lecture more and a detailed website is the only way. My social networks satisfy most of my requests. I am on Facebook, Twitter, Twitter Pic, have a blog, and prefer to have people e-mail me directly with the measurements of their quilt to give them an estimate along with attached pictures for their quilting needs. I could forward one that I just did this morning so you can see. Makes it more personal.37

Julia Graves of Maryland, on the other hand, believes that the investment in an online presence has been worth the business generated by having a website. She related:

It generates enough business to make it worthwhile, although most of my business comes from my guilds. I have pricing, samples of my work, class descriptions, copy of my rental agreement, available pantographs, etc. I especially like that it weeds out people that have no idea how expensive custom quilting, or making a custom quilt is, so they can see the prices and only call me when they’re serious. It’s got all the information a person would need to know what my longarm classes are all about, pricing for classes and rental, and directions to my studio.38

Newspaper and magazines, email newsletters, and direct mail were cited by so few PMQs that they all appear to be inconsequential marketing techniques. The cost of an advertisement in newspapers and magazines is high and, because it is not specifically directed to the target market of quilters, it may not reach the intended customer. The efforts and costs required to maintain a customer database in order to produce an email newsletter or direct mail campaign would cut into the time available to actually perform
thequiltingservices,thusminimizingtheprofitpotentialofusingthattimeatoactually
quilt.PMQsknowthatapersonalanddirectrelationshipwiththequiltmakeristhebest
meansofbuildingandnurturingtheircustomerbase.

Pricing Structures and Quilting Styles

Successful Quilting Business*, Carol Thelen advises PMQs on setting prices for their
services. She stated:

There is no such thing as an “average price per quilt” that will fit all quilters.
Each professional quilter can determine the average price he or she makes per
quilt over a certain time period by collecting and analyzing the data. . . . You
need to determine what an average dollar amount per quilt might be for your
business. If there are other professional quilters in your area, find out what they
charge for quilting. Some charge per square inch, per square foot, or per square
yard; other have a range of prices for a range of quilt sizes.39

In the survey, PMQ respondents were asked in an optional open-ended question to
describe how they calculate fees for their services. The question included the qualifier
that all information would remain anonymous and not be used for any commercial
endeavors. Ninety-four percent (267) provided responses to this question.

As Thelen remarked, there is no structure that fits all quilters but, for the most
part, 76 percent (217) of the respondents use a pricing structure that is based on the size
of the quilt, calculated either by the square inch, foot, yard, or meter. Additionally, the
rate charged often includes a premium multiplier based on the level, density, or style of
quilting provided. Allover or edge-to-edge quilting, done with no relationship to the
patchwork or appliqué designs on the quilt top, is often charged at a lesser rate than
specific stylized quilting. Allover can be done using pantograph patterns (see Chapter II)
or freehand, depending on the preferences and skill level of the quilter. Custom quilting is performed in direct relationship to the quilt top pattern and can include stitch-in-the-ditch or motif designs. The highest tier of custom quilting is heirloom quilting and involves tighter and denserquilting with more intricate designs. Both custom and heirloom styles can be done freehand or computer-guided and require creativity, planning, and significant skill. For the convenience of their customers, many PMQs provide ancillary products such as batting, specialty threads, and backing fabrics. Along with theirquilting services, many quilters also offer additional services such as finishing and binding to be a full-service finishing provider to the quiltmaker.

One PMQ provided a detailed explanation for her pricing calculations. Like the majority of the respondents, this PMQ determines her quilting fees based on the overall size of the quilt. For allover, edge-to-edge quilting, this PMQ will charge 1.5 cents per square inch. For custom work depending on thequilting detail and density requested by the customer, she charges 4 to 5 cents per square inch. This means that for a queen-size quilt measuring 84” by 98” (or 8,232 square inches total), the quilting fee will fall into a range of $124 to $412. As an additional service, the PMQ will fully complete this quilt by constructing and attaching a binding at a fee of $3 per running foot. At that rate, this queen-size quilt would cost approximately $90 to finish, bringing the total cost of completion, including quilting and binding, to between $212 and $502.40

While many of the PMQs initiate their business because of their love of quilting and the artistic and creative work, they quickly realize that to be profitable and receive a return on the significant financial and educational investment, they must establish solid business practices, including good record keeping, customer relations, and competitive
pricing. For this aspect of their business, not all may be fully prepared. Cindy Roth of Longarmuniversity.com conducts online workshops to help PMQs succeed both artistically and financially. In her booklet entitled “Pricing for your Longarm Quilting Business,” Roth admonishes PMQs to avoid undercharging for their services. She states:

This is your business and you can set your own prices, but I caution you NOT to set your prices too low. You have a skill that many people don’t have or choose not to do themselves. YOU SHOULD BE WELL COMPENSATED FOR THIS SKILL!! [Emphasis original author]41

Support for their Endeavors

As the challenges are myriad and there is no established blueprint on which to depend, PMQs utilize every resource possible to establish and support their business endeavors. The companies from which they purchase their equipment are a tremendous help for the PMQs. In their survey responses, 94 percent (267) received some support from their vendors in several forms including presale, delivery, setup, education, telephone support, on-site trouble-shooting, and repairs. They rely on books, magazines, and videos for the latest tips and techniques. Formal classes are a common way to expand their knowledge with 82 percent (235) reporting their attendance in a class or seminar. With access to email groups, discussion forums, and streaming video, PMQs reported the value of online resources. Gretchen Adams of New York stated:

The internet. Probably the most valuable tool. There are several lists for longarm professionals. We are able to establish relationships with our peers, share our trials and triumphs. participate in exchanges. I would not be the quilter I am today had it not been for the internet resources.42
The value of friends and associates in the industry is paramount. Sixty-two percent (176) of the PMQs belong to a quilting guild; many belong to several groups. Sandy Merritt of New Jersey explained:

I belong to a regular quilt guild (not professionals) and I get a lot of general quilting support there. I also have two local machine quilters who are friends, who were in business before me. We support each other by borrowing thread and other supplies when necessary (when something is backordered for instance) and by giving each other business when we can't take it on. It is nice to just have someone local to talk to about the ins and outs. I understand many people can't have this type of relationship with other local quilters because they "compete" for customers, but since my business is so small these two know I am not really competition. They were both extremely helpful to me when I was started out and have continued to be for the nearly 5 years since. Most of my business comes from my own small regular guild which they are not members of.43

As Merritt points out, relationships with other PMQs can be challenging in light of the possibility of competing with each other.

Reactions to Competition

The survey respondents were asked in an open-ended, optional question to describe their reaction when a new PMQ initiates a business in their area. The question included the qualifier that all information would remain anonymous and not be used for any commercial endeavors. Ninety-three percent (265) elected to respond to this question. The largest group of the respondents, 35 percent (93), commented that they actively support competitors (see figure 4.8). Due to the overwhelming quantity of unfinished quilt tops in the world, several PMQs endorsed supporting their competition as there seems to be enough business to keep them all employed for a long time to come.
Figure 4.8. PMQ Reaction to Area Competition. The reaction PMQs have to new competition is represented in this pie chart.
Regarding her reaction to competition, one PMQ remarked:

I think it's great. They usually start out charging more than I do. I charge a $1.65 a square foot for quilting and sell batting and backing if you need it. I make $20+ an hour depending on pattern and quilt size. To me that is good money and I am happy with that amount. New people getting into the business now are using computerized machines which cost more to start their business than what it cost me to start years ago. So they need to charge more to start. I have no problem referring people to other quilters if they want something I don't do. There is plenty of business for all of us. I am also willing to help new quilters if they have questions I can answer. I have even helped them to learn to use their machines if they have asked for help. When I started I had no one to ask for help other than the lady who sold me the machine and she was a phone call away. Machine quilting is hard work so some buy a machine and don't last long for whatever reason and some love what they do and are still going strong. Some buy machines just to quilt their own quilts and never go into business. There is room for everyone.44

Seventeen percent (46) commented that they welcomed the competition and wished their competitors good luck. Another PMQ said:

Different people quilt different ways. You may not always have the particular style a quilter wants on their top and it is nice to be able to send them along to someone else who may be able to "fit" them better. I think being able to do that only benefits everyone.45

Not everyone was as enthusiastic in the face of competition. Twenty-three percent (60) commented that their reactions were ambivalent, like the respondent who stated that “I'm happy for a new quilter to have her machine, and to trade techniques/ideas with, but at the same time I'm not happy about yet another one to compete with. The area I'm in is pretty saturated with longarm quilters.”46 One PMQ provides support but retains some secrets. She explained:

I always try to be encouraging and offer to give them any advice I can, I remember my first days of quilting. Internally I am curious to see if they have what it takes to do the work, as this is work. But to show that visibly would be discouraging and that's not part of my personality. Usually I let them know I'm around and will help them get their feet under them for the technical stuff. I do not share my "specialties". Being self-taught, I have learned the value of desiring
to be proficient enough to seek out the knowledge. But, I do help with the basics to get them on the right track. As far as concerns I have heard other quilters state considering "volume of business" or losing work, I used to worry about that, but have come to realize that each quilter sees, processes and thinks differently and choices are good for the consumer. If I offer a quality product, at a quality price, and listen to my customers, I see no reason to do anything other than encourage new quilters. When I started in this business, there were only 2 of us locally, and then it grew to about 10 or so. And it's risen and lowered back and forth over the years as new quilters start to learn this is a "business" and it is "work". Currently there are 3 of us here who are established, and one new quilter who I spent yesterday afternoon with explaining how to baste a customer quilt for hand-quilting and how to take locking stitches. In this industry, being authentic to who you are goes as far as knowledge – at least in the area I live.\footnote{47}

Seventeen percent (45) related neutrality in regards to competition, that it did not affect them one way or another. One PMQ commented that “I don't have a problem with it. My machine is paid for, and I am as busy as I want to be. I also have enough repeat customers that like the way I do business that I don't have to worry about them taking away my clientele.”\footnote{48} Another PMQ is confident that her skill set will offset any competitive pressure. She said:

I'm not threatened because I do something unique they [her competitors] cannot. My clients come to me as a designer first and a machine quilter second. They know they'll get something unique and different from the average quilter who produces the same designs over and over again.\footnote{49}

Within difficult economic times, it is no surprise that 6 percent (16) expressed a significant concern of losing business to new PMQs and 2 percent (5) refused any support to their competition. In describing her feelings, a PMQ stated:

Sheer, unadulterated panic! This literally strikes the fear of God into me, complete with nausea. I left a 23 year career to do this and because I am so in love with it, the thought of the bottom dropping out and not being able to sustain an income stream any longer is excruciating. This in and of itself is enough to motivate me to be the best darn long armer in the world! (Ok, in the general area then.) I take great pride in doing outstanding work and strive for perfection. Just in case this scenario should actually happen, I hope my work would speak for itself.\footnote{50}
This is a business, no doubt, and in some areas the competition for quilting customers has become fierce. One PMQ who planned on retiring soon after responding to the survey is glad to be leaving as the competition in her area is getting intense. She related:

I have helped many get started. I don't mind giving them the basics because I sure didn't get help when I started. There weren't many tools or books etc. back then. I did lose some customers to them but most of them eventually came back. One of my customers bought my old machine, then bought another machine also and is now a dealer for Gammill. She runs 5 - 6 machines daily doing customer quilts. It has really hurt the long-arm business for the rest of us. That's why I said we are getting out in the nick of time. By running all those machines, her turn-around time is very short. The rest of us can't compete. A few quilters have already gone out of business here.51

Competition aside, there are many aspects of the business that keep PMQs engaged and enthralled in their work.

Aspects Enjoyed

Despite the challenges, PMQs are happy in their choice of profession. Using a multi-option variable question with offered variables of the quilting process; innovations, trying new techniques; creativity; customer interaction; being self-employed; income earned; and the open-ended option of other, PMQs related the aspects of their business that they enjoyed most (see figure 4.9).

The quilting process was important to 93 percent (264) of the respondents, followed closely by the creativity of their business with an 85 percent (243) response rate. Susanne Hughes of Queensland, Australia, related that her business gives her “increased self esteem and a feeling of achievement doing something that [she loves] doing.”52 Rebecca Smith of South Dakota commented that she enjoys having so many
Figure 4.9. Aspects Enjoyed by PMQs. The reported aspects of their cottage industry by the PMQs is illustrated in this bar chart.
beautiful quilts pass through her home.\textsuperscript{53} Cindy Dickinson of Tennessee takes pleasure in the transformation that quilting provides to a quilt top.\textsuperscript{54}

Having a flexible schedule is an aspect of the business appreciated by many of the PMQs. Seventy-six percent (217) of PMQs enjoy being their own bosses. Several PMQs elaborated with comments related to being self-employed. Erin Underwood of Maryland appreciates being home for her children\textsuperscript{55} and for Linda Fiegel of Kansas, her availability to her grandchildren is important.\textsuperscript{56} Seventy-three percent (207) enjoy being innovative in their business, trying new techniques. Sixty-five percent (186) reported they enjoy the interaction with the customer. Lu Ann Baskin of Pennsylvania and Shirlee Berry of Ohio both specifically commented on how satisfying it is to see a joyous look on a customer’s face upon viewing their completed quilt.\textsuperscript{57} The income earned by these business endeavors had a response rate of 64 percent (181). The fact that so many PMQs, significantly more than half of the respondents, enjoy this aspect suggests that most are not unhappy with the income received for the efforts employed.

Other aspects cited include reduced stress relief, freedom and independence, constructive work, and the satisfaction of a job well done. Nancy Rab of Ohio looks forward to her reward of “dark chocolate to celebrate a quilt well done!”\textsuperscript{58} There seems to be significant job satisfaction, that is derived from a multitude of aspects, in a machine-quilting services business.

Changes Seen and Foreseen

Many of the PMQs have seen significant changes in this industry – in the technology, the equipment, the processes, the materials, and the attitudes of the
quiltmaking community towards their work. The survey included three open-ended questions related to change. The first question was specific to their business and asked the respondents to describe the changes seen in their customers, services, or practices. The second question in the survey asked what changes had been seen in attitudes toward machine quilting as an artform. The third question asked them to predict future changes in the overall industry, equipment, or technology. Much overlap was found in the responses to all three questions because this is a dynamic industry, reliant upon change and instrumental in providing change. The responses to all these questions shed light on the quilting world in which the PMQs operate.

PMQs were especially aware of changes in technology, their customers, and overall attitudes towards machine quilting within the quiltmaking community. The technological developments in the quilting equipment have formed this industry and will significantly impact its future. At its core, the professional machine-quilting industry is a service business, and thus, it has been and will be shaped and molded by the customers’ demands and desires. Attitudes toward machine quilting have been the impetus for the establishment of the professional machine-quilting industry and so have increased business for the PMQs.

Technological Changes

With the development of the professional-caliber equipment, discussed in Chapter III, the machine-quilting services industry was born. Since the mid-1980s, the equipment has evolved and improved. Heads have become longer, stronger, and lighter. The frames have become sturdier, extended, and more maneuverable. Computer controls generated
first the stitch regulators and now computer-guided quilting. The PMQs are a technically-savvy group as evidenced by their embrace of this innovative equipment. So, as such, they tend to stay tuned to all the developments that ensue. That is not to say that they all agree on the benefits of all the technology available.

The latest advance is the computer-guided quilting process. Many PMQs find it exciting and extol the benefits of stitch-perfect quilting. Daisy Schrock of Virginia explained that “the computerized long-arms have some incredibly beautiful patterns and as the long-arm operators have gained experience, their work is more creative and technically excellent.”59 Linda Rech of Washington predicted that “the computerized thing will explode--digitized designs are getting easier and easier and the interface with the computer and the machine gets better and easier all the time.”60 Eugenia Hodenpel of Colorado recognized that the improved product had influenced her customers. She explained that “customers are becoming more knowledgeable about what is available and what a computerized system can do as opposed to a manually driven system. Better quality means the customers have higher expectations.”61 Cheryl Mathre of Virginia cited the benefits to the quilter herself. She commented that “As computerized systems evolve it is the way to go. Computerized systems take the physical wear and tear away from the body, they are accurate and can stitch very intricate patterns repeatedly.”62 Shelley Nealon of California is very enthusiastic about her computerized system. She said “I would never go back to hand guided machines. Anything that can be done on a hand guided system can also be done, plus so much more, on a computerized system.”63
Additional automated control by the equipment may also mean a shorter learning curve for the quilter, which may create an increased interest in purchasing a machine for either professional or personal use. Ruth Hunter of Florida related:

Machine quilting, especially computerized machine quilting is still in its infancy. Like the personal computer, I feel that it will become "the norm" for relative ease and accuracy of the pattern. One can get into this end of the business without having the actual quilting skills as long as they have some computer knowledge (to manipulate patterns, clip or expand them etc).  

Karen Collin of California commented that she “love[s] the creativity non-computerized systems allow but can see how the computerized machines will have a market with those who don't want to invest the time in learning a hand guided system.”

Although the PMQs are intrigued and excited about future technologies, not all are enamored of the computer-guided systems. Some PMQs are concerned that this automation will increase competition within their market. Heather Shanks of Queensland, Australia, remarked:

Computers also have a habit of becoming cheaper and therefore more readily available. Professional machine quilters may therefore become less in demand as hobbyists find ways and means of quilting their own quilts quickly and easily and still achieve a professional finish.

While she is concerned about a reduced customer base, Georgia Stull of Missouri believes that the computer is not an absolute solution to the high learning curve of the equipment. She commented:

I believe technology will continue to grow. I sometimes worry that it will be hard to keep a large customer base as more and more people get their own longarm. But, the average quilter is not willing or able to make the big money investment in the equipment. It is hard to become very talented at the craft if you don't quilt as a business--you just don't get enough practice. I know at least 3 women that bought a longarm for themselves but don't use it because they found it too hard to use. They are now my customers!
Charlotte Freeman of California observed:

There are many many more machines in our area and many more being manufactured. The machines have so many bells and whistles it makes your mind spin. I started out with a basic no frills machine, got used to it, and have had no incentive to spent the money to upgrade. I think the new stitch regulated machines allow a new quilter to become a great quilter much faster.

However, I am not a fan of the computer generated designs. I can spot a computer generated design a mile away – they have no personality – all the stitches and designs are identical – no character caused by the hand of the designer – think about it, you'll see what I mean. Perfect is what we all strive for but not at the cost of Character. 68

The denigration of the artistic skills required to produce fine machine quilting are the concern of Cindy Vasilnek of Michigan. She commented:

I will state that I'm opposed to the computer based long arm quilting. This is not an art. You're basically setting up a computer to do the work for you. I would like to see more adversity to this kind of quilting in the market. More long armers need to voice their opinion on this, it's taking the business away from those who are truly being creative as opposed to a computer doing the work. I think it needs to stop or not allow quilts that were done by a computer to be entered into shows. 69

Though controversial, computer-guided quilting, like all technology, will undoubtedly be not only accepted but integrated into quiltmaking. Faith Horsky of California believes that the future is inevitable. She remarked:

Oh, the computer! And yet I hate the perfection it gives to a quilt. I love the humps and bumps and wiggles that make it "handmade". However, I realize how when I started quilting we didn't approve of quilts that weren't hand quilted, so I realize that the computerize quilts will be the accepted norm soon. 70

Deborah Jett McVay of New Jersey summed up her thoughts on the technological advances. She said:

I expect to see a significant push to computer-guided quilting with a strict delineation occurring with those who embrace it and those who are specific to hand guided. There will be more time spent explaining to customers the difference, benefit and limitation in each area and why a longarmer chooses one
over the other. I expect to see almost a 'sweatshop' approach by some to increase the volume of tops completed for money purposes, while others will significantly scale back any type of non-freehand design and promote the latter as more art-oriented and unique to the specific top presented. It's going to be an interesting time in quilting over the next five years to see how this advances and what camps form.\textsuperscript{71}

Customer and Business Changes

Many of the PMQs recognized changes related to the customers of their services. These included comments regarding their customers’ improved piecing skills, higher standards in fabric selection, expanded education, and more demanding specifications regarding the quilting itself, as well as the customers’ increased quilt production.

Marjorie Cowles of Vermont remarked that “The quality of piecing, attention to detail, and the use of fine fabrics to make their quilt tops has been the biggest improvement. Understanding the process of machine quilting and accepting it as a superior method of fine quilting.”\textsuperscript{72} Sherryl Tobias of Indiana also commented about the quilters’ increased skills. She said:

I have a few new quilters. And at first they used lower grade fabric and their piecing was not as precise as it could have been. But from one quilt to the next I can see an improvement and also better fabric. The have pride in their quilts and that grows with every one they bring to me. I always let them know what a good job they have done. Especially my new piecers, they need to know that it is great that they finished their top. Just that is a huge accomplishment.\textsuperscript{73}

Customers are also more educated about machinequilting. Sherry Osland explained:

I have worked to better educate my customers and they have been very receptive (techniques, battings, threads, some construction tips, etc). They are also taking classes through their LQS [local quilt shop] and their guilds. Quality has improved overall. They know more what they want from me and how to ask for it.\textsuperscript{74}

99
The customers are more discerning and exacting about the quality and workmanship of the machine quilting. Michele of New South Wales, Australia, reported that “My customers expect a higher level of expertise in the quilting – they are becoming more discerning and judgmental (in a good way) and know quality quilting when they see it.”75 Kathy Applebaum of California remarked that “More customers understand what longarm quilting is; more customers understand that more can be done with a longarm than just meandering.”76 Susan Foster has been quilting for over five years and in that time she has seen several changes. She commented “My customers have increased in their skill levels, and I've added more intermediate and advanced customers. Services have been steadily increasing from pantos to custom to heirloom.”77

Several PMQs stated that they have seen an increased production of quilts by their quiltmaking customers. The comments of Shannon Baker of Georgia encompass many changes that she has seen in her career as a PMQ, including the increased production of her customers. She remarked:

The first thing is that machine quilted quilts are becoming more 'acceptable.' I remember when if a quilt was machine quilted it wasn't a quilt, it was considered a comforter. Also, my customers are becoming more educated about the whole long-arming process. It has also allowed quilters to be more productive. Imagine if every quilter still had to hand quilt every quilt top they sewed. Now, they can make four to five quilts a month and let the LAers [LongArmers or PMQs] of the world quilt them. Most of my customers say that the quilting is their least favorite thing to do. Hence, me having a job :) I also feel that the quality of quilting has improved leaps and bounds from just 8 years ago. And I feel that it will continue to improve as technology grows. Now you have long arm machines driven by computers but I will still be standing in front of my machine hand guiding every stitch I quilt.78

Several of PMQs cited changes related to their business and included comments related to their own skill sets and quilting processes, the technology changes including
computer-guided quilting, and a drop in their business due to increased competition from new PMQs and their customers striving to quilt their own quilts. Helen Baczynski of Nevada summed up how technology has impacted professional machine quilting. She said:

Machine quilting has become the norm. Much more support for machine quilters – books, classes, conventions, tools – all have increased since I began. The machines have developed a lot too – when I bought my machine in 1998 there were no stitch regulators, very few tools and no classes to speak of. Now there are all of those and there is a growing choice of computer guidance systems.  

Attitude Changes

There is much evidence that the attitudes toward machine quilting have changed during the course of the contemporary quilt movement and the professional machine quilters have been on the frontlines of this change. Kelly Deutsch of Pennsylvania was once a “machine quilting hater,” but is now “in awe of the work that the real machine artists can produce.”80 Heather Shanks of Queensland, Australia, another hand-quilter who shifted to machine quilting, stated:

Although many quilters still love and admire hand quilting, myself included, the majority of my customers make quilts to give as gifts and they need them finished yesterday. Also, there is an increasing number of sewers who just love making the quilt tops (which can be relatively quick) and the quilting itself is just too much hard work to enjoy. In this day and age, there never seems to be enough hours in the day, living is so fast paced. We always seem to be rushing. 81

Cindy Roth, long-time PMQ and founder of the website, longarmuniversity, related her experiences. She said:

I have seen a HUGE change since I started professional quilting. When I started over 13 years ago, most quilts were quilted with ugly (in my opinion) huge pantographs with big, fluffy, polyester batting. There was virtually no custom work being done. Machine quilting was considered "bad" and only your "bad" quilts were machine quilted. (Note: most of the machine quilting I had seen before
I bought my first machine really was bad quilting!) There was no acceptance of machine quilting in quilt shows or anything else. Since then, machine quilting (especially longarm quilting) has gained huge acceptance, gained huge respect, and the quilting being done today is phenomenal.  

Two impetuses seemed to overlap in motivating quilters and accomplishing these changes – beauty and time. In order for PMQs to establish this cottage industry by which they earn a living, machine quilting had to be recognized as an approved, accepted, and appreciated process for finishing quilts. Then, in order for this industry to thrive, quilters needed to consent to relinquishing partial ownership of the quilt, granting permission to someone else quilt it. Karen Simmons of Louisiana described her experience with these shifts in her own attitude toward machine quilting and partnering with a PMQ. She explained:

I can honestly say that the biggest change in attitude has been my own. I was a dedicated hand-quilter for many years. I used to think pantograph quilting [edge-to-edge] made a quilt look like a bedspread from JC Penney's. I could finish 1 or 2 quilts a year and that was fine, because I only had 2 sons, and worked full-time. Now I have Step-children, sons and daughters-in-law, and 8 Wonderful grandchildren! Like many women, I'll never have enough time to hand quilt for them all. I want to make more tops and have them finished. I think there are a lot of toppers [quilters who prefer making quilt tops] like me out there! Also, longarm quilting is prettier, more creative, just looks better than those old mattress pad quilts we used to see!

Cheryl Lorence of Ohio has also experienced both motivators in her business. She said:

While there are still some folks who believe the only way to quilt is by hand, there are more and more folks who have accepted the advancement of machine quilting as a practical way to get their quilts finished. The fact that more of my customers are requesting custom quilting [as opposed to the less-expensive edge-to-edge] shows their appreciation of machine quilting as an artform.

Even though the practice of having a professional quilt your quilt had once been a long-established tradition, it took some time for the contemporary quilters to embark on this path. Sandy Merritt of New Jersey commented:
I have been in business almost 5 years. In that time I think that having your quilts professionally quilted has become much more accepted. It almost seemed like some of them were embarrassed at the beginning, in guild meeting to stand up and say "Sandy quilted this one" but now they don't have that problem! I think the national quilt shows and programs, and even just ads in the national magazines have made it more acceptable.

Time is of the essence. Quiltmakers want and need their tops completed. Before she became a PMQ, Cyndy Clark of California experienced this. She said: “Years ago I wouldn't even look at machine quilted quilts. I was a hand only quilter. I changed my mind when I sent out my first quilt to be machine quilted. She did a wonderful job and best of all IT WAS DONE.” Terri Watson of Michigan said:

I believe there is more acceptance toward sending your top out to be quilted. I believe some piecers are seeing that they can do the processes that they enjoy (piecing) and send the top to be quilted without guilt. They see tops in major shows with fantastic quilting and are beginning to see the difference the actual quilting makes.

Linda Steller of Oregon said “I think quilters are now so much into piecing and trying new fabrics that they like to have someone else to finish their quilts. They don't want to be delayed finishing and instead prefer to just move on to the next project.” Pamela Thompson of Michigan said:

Machine quilting has become accepted and is more the norm than it was 20+ years ago when I first started quilting. I have been longarming about 6 years and it is even more accepted now. A lot of ladies do not know the complete process of making a quilt these days, they only know how to make the tops.

Many participants in the contemporary quilt movement would agree with Jeanne Elliott of New Hampshire when she stated that machine quilting has “gone from – no way to the only way.” The changes wrought to the international quilting community by the Professional Machine Quilters are substantial. The services PMQs offer to their customers are valued and prized. Machine quilting has been recognized as an acceptable
process to finish quilts and is even celebrated for the unique and beautiful characteristics it can provide to a finished quilt. With more ideas for new quilt projects and time at a premium, quiltmakers have given their resounding consent to collaborate with professional machine quilters to quilt their work and contribute to the finished product. Quiltmakers are willing to partner with a PMQ and share ownership in the final project. Wholeheartedly, the quiltmakers have become happy and enthusiastic customers of the PMQ industry. The next chapter will discuss the experiences, attitudes, and habits of the customers and how these have been impacted by their associations with PMQs.
Notes


4 Ibid., 107.


8 See Chapter II, pages 31-32.

9 Respondents were located in every state except Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, and Nebraska plus the District of Columbia.

10 The number in the parentheses is the numerical value of survey responses of Professional Machine Quilters used to derive the percentage cited. Due to rounding in the calculations, the percentages may not total 100 percent.

11 See Appendix A for the University of Akron IRB Notice of Approval. All names are cited in this thesis with the express permission of the individual as granted in the permission section of the online survey. See Appendix B.


14 Robin Irvine, Friendswood, TX, survey response, July 31, 2008.

15 Tracie Munds, Caldwell, ID, survey response, August 1, 2008.
22 Sheila [no last name provided], Monroe, WA, survey response, July 31, 2008.
23 Kelley Jones, Greensboro, NC, survey response, August 1, 2008.
27 Cheryl Isbell, Lewisville, TX, survey response, August 11, 2008.
32 Heather Shanks, Queensland, Australia, survey response, July 31, 2008.
33 Carol Edgerly, Cloverdale, OR, survey response, July 31, 2008.
34 Samantha McKie, Fulton, NY, survey response, August 9, 2008.
35 Mary Jo Yackley, MO City, TX, survey response, September 7, 2008.
37 Allison Bayer, Plano, TX, email to author, November, 2, 2009.

38 Julia Graves, Bowie, MD, email to author, November 1, 2009.


40 Email message to author, June 12, 2010, name withheld to protect the privacy of the PMQ.


44 Anonymous respondent, survey response, August 6, 2008.


48 Ibid., survey response, July 31, 2008.


50 Ibid., survey response, August 20, 2008.


52 Susanne Hughes, Ocean View, Queensland, Australia, survey response, July 31, 2008.

53 Rebecca Smith, Hermosa, SD, survey response, July 30, 2008.


Eugenia Hodenpel, Parker, CO, survey response, August 18, 2008.


Shelley Nealon, San Jose, CA, survey response, August 12, 2008.


Heather Shanks, Palm Beach, Queensland, Australia, survey response, July 31, 2008.


Ibid.


Sherryl Tobias, Nappanee, IN, survey response, July 30, 2008.

Sherry Osland, Abilene, KS, survey response, August 1, 2008.

Michele [no last name provided], Cranebrook, New South Wales, Australia, survey response, July 30, 2008.
Kathy Applebaum, Sacramento, CA, survey response, August 6, 2008.

Susan Foster, Newmarket, NH, survey response, July 30, 2008.


Heather Shanks, Queensland, Australia, survey response, July 31, 2008.

Cindy Roth, Renton, WA, survey response, August 17, 2008.

Karen Simmons, Columbia, LA, survey response, August 1, 2008.

Cheryl Lorence, Newark, OH, survey response, July 29, 2008.


Cyndy Clark, Napa, CA, survey response, August 17, 2008.

Terri Watson, Grandville, MI, survey response, August 2, 2008.


Pamela Thompson, Clinton Township, MI, survey response, July 30, 2008.

CHAPTER V

CUSTOMERS OF PROFESSIONAL MACHINE-QUILTING SERVICES

While the motivations for making a quilt may seem as varied as the quilters themselves, research has been conducted to ascertain the common motivators to pursuing a needlework hobby that entails an investment of time and money along with a commitment to completion. Joyce Starr Johnson and Laurel E. Wilson investigated “how textile handcrafts were created and used in the daily lives of contemporary women.” This study included quiltmaking as a textile handcraft. They reported:

Handcrafted textile objects are embedded with meaning through their creation and use. Handcrafted textiles are symbolic of the maker and her relationship with other people. These objects are valued by their creators as symbols of self, who feel the object is special because it is not mass produced. These items are made with love and are connected to personal histories.

So, the quilter will imbue her quilts with meaning through the process of making the quilt and the subsequent use of that quilt. The quilt becomes a symbol of self to the quilter and then bonds the quilter to the recipient of that quilt. The quilt represents the love the quilter has for and the personal connection to the final owner.

There is one significant requirement for this meaning to come to fruition – that is, the completion of the quilt and its bestowing to the recipient. No meaning can be ascribed to an uncompleted quilt which in quiltmaking vernacular is referred to as a UFO (UnFinished Object) and making a quilt, from start to finish, is not an easy endeavor.
Quiltmaking is a process that entails several steps, each with its own fundamental and basic skill set. Some steps of this process are intellectual – like imagination, creativity, and motivation – and some are physical – like cutting, sewing, and ironing. For the most part, these steps can be learned, but talent and motivation also count substantially towards success. First, a quilter must be inspired – get an idea in her head (gender reference for simplification only, no implication intended). Second, she must be motivated to get started. Third, she must make several decisions on pattern, color, fabric, and placement. Next, she may have to draft or draw the pattern or design, and transfer it to the fabric. This is followed by cutting and then construction, which means piecing, appliquéing, or both techniques. Quilting the layers together, whether done by hand or machine or both, requires yet more decisions, more drawing, more transferring, more skills. Then the quilt is finished with binding or by some other means, and, hopefully, labeled. To achieve the end product, there are lots of steps, lots of decisions, and lots of skills, plus a requirement for continuous motivation. Often these steps are not sequential, nor are they discrete and finite; some, like motivation, must be continually renewed and refreshed or completion will never be accomplished. The finished quilt, consequently, becomes a source of significant pride for the quiltmaker. There is an investment of personal identity for the quiltmaker, derived from the skills required and the creativity exhibited by the final product. The finished quilt stands as a testament to the talents and abilities of the quiltmaker.

Enumerating the steps shows how much effort and how many different skills are involved in one seemingly simple quilt. The product cannot be separated from the process. Due to the vast array of skills and individual steps, not all parts of the overall
quiltmaking process are given the same importance, weight, or consideration by the makers. Some, if not most, quiltmakers may simply not enjoy one or more of the myriad steps involved in making a quilt or they may lack confidence in their skills for a particular step. Consequently, these quiltmakers may seek other ways to accomplish that step, collaborating, perhaps, with an expert. Quiltmakers who are intimidated by what they perceive as creative pressures may purchase quilt kits with the fabrics all pre-selected, sometimes even pre-cut. All that is required of the maker is to do the necessary sewing. Others, who find the design work daunting, work only from quilt pattern “recipes,” which provide complete cutting and construction instructions often accompanied by fabric suggestions to relieve them of much of the design work. Still other quiltmakers, who, in Marie Webster’s words, find the quilting process a “wicked waste of time” or to ensure that the work invested in the quilt top is not “marred” as Carrie Hall and Rose Kretsinger worried, seek the services of an expert quilter.²

As described in Chapter IV, employment of a quilting expert has long been a practice of quiltmakers. This practice, however, had been largely abandoned as the late twentieth-century quilt revival got started. In the contemporary quilt movement, with the services available from the Professional Machine Quilters (PMQs), this practice has been revitalized and redefined. This chapter describes survey results from the point-of-view of the customers of the PMQs. It will illustrate the collaborative relationship between the quiltmakers and Professional Machine Quilters (PMQs) along with the impact of that partnership on the contemporary quilt movement. This chapter will discuss the relationship between the customers and the PMQs from its inception with the customers’ initial motivations for employing a PMQ and the selection process through which a
customer selects a specific PMQ with whom to work. It will explore how the PMQ and quiltmaker work together on the quilting designs, and the aspects of the relationship which lead to repeat employment. It will also discuss the disappointments experienced by customers within this collaborative relationship; how and when terminations have occurred; and ideas or suggestions for improvement and changes desired by the customers. Although these relationships rarely exist without some disappointments, the partnership between quiltmaker and PMQ is usually extremely satisfying. Once established, the relationship between the quiltmaker and PMQ is integral to the work of both. The positive impact will be explained in the customers’ own words.

Customer Survey Results Overview

There were 264 respondents to the online survey who identified with the role of customer of PMQ services. These respondents represented thirty-six states, with the greatest numbers from California, Maryland, Ohio, Texas, and West Virginia. At the time of the survey, the majority of them, 54 percent (143), had been customers of PMQs for over five years; 37 percent (99) had been customers for one to five years; and 9 percent (23) had been customers for under one year (see figure 5.1).

During their association with PMQs, 52 percent (137) of the respondents had fewer than ten quilts professionally machine quilted; 28 percent (75) had between ten and twenty quilts professionally machine quilted; and 20 percent (53) had over twenty quilts professionally machine quilted (see figure 5.2). When asked how many different PMQs the respondents had employed, a significant majority, 98 percent (261), referenced hiring
Figure 5.1. Customer Duration. This pie chart illustrates the length of time over which respondents have been customers of PMQs.
Figure 5.2 Number of Quilts Professionally Quilted. This pie chart illustrates the total number of quilts reported to be professionally quilted by PMQs for each respondent customer.
fewer than ten. Only two respondents cited that they had employed between ten and twenty different PMQs and only one had hired over twenty different PMQs.

Motivations for Employing a PMQ

The relationship between customer and PMQ must begin with the customer’s willingness and desire to collaborate with the PMQ. In the survey, the customers responded to questions as to what motivated them to initially employ a PMQ. Their responses fell into several categories including time constraints; skill or equipment limitations; physical limitations; the beauty of professional machine quilting; friendship with the quilter; and the quality of the quilt top (see figure 5.3). For many quilters, these motivators are overlapping, often concurrent, and may be specifically based on an individual quilt top and its end-purpose.

Time Constraints

Forty-two percent (110) of the customers cited time constraints as the most important reason for employing a PMQ. The time constraints were related to the quiltmaker’s available time or to a deadline associated with a specific quilt. Catherine Sanderson of Ohio said, “I first saw it as a way to complete projects when I was working and time was precious. I could also produce more quilts in less time than it takes to quilt them by hand.” For Lou Ann Elliott of West Virginia, there were several factors associated with time limits. She commented:

I either didn't have enough time in which to finish the project or the project was just too big for me to do on my own machine. Plus, I can get a lot more detail and quilting done on a quilt by a Professional Machine Quilter then I can do on my own. I also have found that I much rather piece then machine quilt!
Figure 5.3. Motivations for Employing a PMQ. This bar chart illustrates the customer respondents’ motivations for initially deciding to employ a PMQ.
Joyce McComas of Maryland was initially anxious about employing a PMQ but time was a compelling motivator. She remarked, “My pile of quilt tops had gotten out of hand. I wanted them to be finished so I could use and show them. Had to talk myself into the whole ordeal.”7 Another quiltmaker with more tops than time was Susan Varesio of Connecticut. She said, “I inherited many tops after my sister's death. I knew that I would never get them all done in my lifetime, I wanted time to work on my own quilts as well.”8 For many quilters, the PMQ completion time was compared to the time required to hand-quilt. Mardele Hawley of Ohio said, “The quilt was too large for me to machine quilt and when I tried to hand quilt it, it took too long. As I told my Mother, not only will she be dead but I'll be dead before I finish her quilt.”9

Several respondents referenced another aspect of time constraints, often to meet deadlines – for birthdays, Christmas, weddings, workshops, charity auctions, quilt shows, shop displays, among others. Betty Carlson of Michigan described her quilt show deadline in employing the services of a PMQ. She said, “Time – I was getting tops done but couldn't get them all quilted. I teach quilting classes and prefer to hang finished quilts. The big deadline I reached was a quilt show where I had numerous entries and couldn't see how I could get everything done in time.”10 Kim Brandt of New York stated, “To move some of my quilts [to] ‘being done’ instead of ‘to be quilted.’ So I could finish them and give them as gifts in a more timely manner.”11 Quiltmaking instructor Julie Bragg of Ohio remarked that she employs PMQs to ensure that her class samples are completed on-time.12 Jennilyn Landbeck of Maryland “was desperate to finish a quilt as a wedding gift and knew that [she] couldn't get it done on [her] own.”13
Time is finite and the quiltmaker must decide how and when to spend her time. The availability of professional machine-quilting services helps make that decision easier.

Skill or Equipment Limitations

For many quiltmakers, 40 percent (105) of the respondents, the motivation for hiring a PMQ is their own lack of skill or equipment required to perform quilting up to their standards and expectations. Sharon Judkins of Arkansas said, “I had several quilts to give as graduation gifts and knew I would not be able to quilt them all. I don't mind quilting them myself (only straight line quilting on my home machine) but I have a hard time pinning them together and it was easier to let someone else do it.”\(^{14}\) Lisa Ruch of Illinois related that “It was a way to get the quilting done without frustration and sooner than would have been done if I'd had to do it myself.”\(^ {15}\) Kathy Delaney of Kansas wrote that she was frustrated “with the hand quilting process [and she] just wanted to get it done!”\(^ {16}\) Lola Franks of Ohio remarked, “I had begun piecing my own quilts but was not yet skilled in regular machine quilting my own work.”\(^ {17}\) Marsha Hunt of Pennsylvania said, “I cannot machine quilt anything larger than a baby quilt on my machine. I rarely hand quilt as my pleasure in the hobby is piecing the tops.”\(^ {18}\) Leslie Sumner of Maryland commented, “My finished tops were piling up and I didn't want to waste the effort by messing them up with my amateur quilting. I don't enjoy the process of quilting nearly as much as the piecing and designing.”\(^ {19}\) For Nancy Badertscher of Virginia, she was limited by both equipment and skill. She commented, “I had a quilt that was too big to do on my domestic sewing machine, and 2 others that were smaller but that I wanted more decorative quilting done on [them] than I can do.”\(^ {20}\)
Physical Limitations

The physical limitations, based either on quilt size or the quilter, prompted 36 percent (96) of the respondents to seek the services of a PMQ. Sharon Jones of Louisiana said that she “cannot quilt large quilts (double or bigger) on my regular machine. Love quilting and have many family members I want to make them for so a professional quilter was my answer.” Jenny Jones of Ohio commented, “The size of my quilt was more than I could do myself. Plus I wanted stitching that I could not do on my machine.” Bonnie Stapleton of Pennsylvania had a similar experience. She said, “I had a queen size quilt that I did not want to wrestle under my home sewing machine. I had already done one that way and wasn't willing to do it again.”

Iris of Ohio remarked, “I enjoy the creativity of piecing tops, I have severe arthritis in my hands which makes hand quilting difficult. It's faster to have a professional do the quilting.” Marge Klingenberg of Ohio said, “Too many finished tops and not enough time to quilt them by hand. Also my hand became a problem since I had carpal tunnel syndrome. It became much easier to take the tops, etc. to have them machine quilted.” Judy Collier of Pennsylvania struggled with her own attempts before she discovered the quilting of a PMQ. She described:

I saw the beautiful work that could be done on a large quilt. Prior to that time, I made only small quilts and machine quilted them myself. I attempted a twin bed size quilt and was extremely frustrated by the difficulty I had maneuvering it through the small opening of my sewing machine. I eventually quit half way through, unable to reach the center of the quilt. After learning about professional machine quilters, I stitch-picked it apart and had it done on a long arm machine. It looks beautiful! Since then, I always have my quilts machine quilted.”
Skill of the PMQ

The special beauty that results from the work of a talented and skillful professional quilter was a motivator for 23 percent (62) of the customer respondents. Sue Jones of Tennessee said, “I was a new quilter and had not done one of my own yet. I had a quilt that had embroidery on it and it needed a professional quilt job to make it spectacular.”27 Cheryl Davies of Ohio had a special quilt for a very special event. She related, “I made a Quilt for my daughter's wedding, so I wanted a nice job done. I got it [quilted professionally] and [my daughter] loved the quilt.”28 Darlene Huettl of South Dakota said that she employed a PMQ “to put the finish touches on my quilt top – or to ‘Bring it to life’!”29 Margaret O’Reilly of Ohio related, “I wanted show quality quilting on a quilt that I felt was ready for competition.”30 Phyllis Poparad of Ohio commented, “I had seen the beautiful work that my quilter has done and I had some quilts that were to be gifts that I knew would be done professionally. Another quilt I had done was one that I could not have quilted myself on my home machine with the results from my professional quilter.”31

Friendship with the PMQ and Quality of the Quilt Top

Survey respondents also mentioned helping out a friend or relative who needed practice on their new professional-caliber equipment and employing a PMQ based on the quality of the quilt top. Though the actual response rates for both these situation were very low, they bear mentioning as indicators of the possible attitudes of quilmakers.

The comments of Kathy Hummel of Ohio illustrate that quilmakers are willing to help fledging PMQs. Hummel remarked:
I am not adept at hand quilting, but enjoy making tops. The tops were piling up and not being completed. A friend purchased a long arm quilting machine and needed quilts to practice and learn on, so I obliged. She quilted these for me at very reasonable prices since she was just learning.32

Also wishing to help her sister become more accomplished with her equipment, Patricia Hall of Ohio related, “My sister, Roma, bought a quilter and she needed to have some quilts to quilt on it. So I volunteered some of my quilts. She is very good at it now.”33

Dianne Pauselius of New York said:

I had never heard of machine quilting until a friend introduced me to her business. I was awestruck by the quality of her work and how beautiful her quilts were. I love to design and piece but stopped quilting because I found the quilting process so tedious. Now I have the best of both worlds!34

Machine quilting can still be considered “inferior” to hand-quilting and, thus, many quilters are delighted to have some of their quilt tops professionally machine quilted but not necessarily their best tops. J. F. Gobeille of New York reflected this attitude when she commented, “I don't have the time to hand quilt all the quilts I make. Not all of them, warrant hand quilting.”35 Jennifer Bonner of Ohio agreed. She remarked, “I really like to sew and piece quilts but I am a slow hand quilter. I do not want to wait up to a year to enjoy a quilt that I've pieced. I save my hand-quilting for very special quilts or possibly competition.”36

The motivations to employ a PMQ are as varied as the customers who employ their services. For some quilters, it is a wonderful convenience that ensures their quilt tops can be finished and put to whatever role designated. Others love and relish the particular styling and characteristics that are possible with professional machine quilting. While it took some time within the contemporary quilt movement for quilters to collaborate with a paid quilter on their personal creations, those who have participated in
this joint venture are appreciative now that the services are available. The next section explores the specifics of this collaborative partnership between customer and PMQ.

Customer Relationships

The relationships between the PMQs and their customers are integral to the success of both parties. For the PMQ, a customer provides income. For the quiltmaker, a PMQ provides an important process needed to achieve the ultimate goal of a completed quilt. The customer portion of the survey contained several questions that explored these relationships. They covered how a customer selects a PMQ; how they work through the design choices; disappointment they have experienced; and decisions to terminate the relationship. The results are enlightening to the evolving industry and the attitudes of the customers who help it grow and thrive.

Locating and Selecting a PMQ

Once a quiltmaker decides to work with a PMQ, she must then locate and select a PMQ with whom to work. Questions about the location reveal interesting themes (see figure 5.4). The most prevalent method for locating a PMQ, with a 55 percent (144) respondent citation, is through word-of-mouth or based on reputation. Also included in this category are the respondents who specifically referred to the PMQ as a friend or friend-of-a-friend. Finding a PMQ through quilt guilds and through local quilt shops were also popular responses with 34 percent (89) and 30 percent (80) respectively. Other methods cited included quilt shows, online groups, and through PMQ advertisements. These responses correlate with the promotional and marketing techniques described by
Figure 5.4. Methods of Locating PMQs. This bar chart illustrates the methods utilized by respondents in locating a PMQ with whom to work.
the PMQs (see Chapter IV). This reinforces the fact that the business of the PMQ is deeply, directly, and personally rooted in the quiltmaking community, through individual relationships, guild memberships, and associations with local quilt shops.

The relational characteristic of this cottage industry is also reflected in the factors that help a customer select a specific PMQ. The reputation of a PMQ was the most significant factor in the decision of customers to employ a PMQ with a 73 percent (193) response rate. This is followed closely by their reaction to the samples presented by the PMQs at 66 percent (173), the PMQ’s rapport and communication with the customer at 60 percent (158), and not insignificantly, the price of the service at 47 percent (123) (see figure 5.5). Amy Scheib of Maryland commented “all four, at one time or another.”

Additional open-ended responses referenced several convenience factors, such as location, availability, and the turnaround time of a PMQ, as motivators. Diane Wagenhals of Pennsylvania commented that her PMQ picks up the quilt top and delivers a finished quilt. Jessica Alexandrakis of Massachusetts remarked that she “liked that [the PMQ’s] home and studio were clean, comfortable and inviting. She was also very well organized and professional.” Several respondents referred to the style used by the PMQ as another decision factor. Deborah Lancaster of California said that she is influenced by “their creativity, and what they suggest doing with the quilt top I've taken to them.” While this is a customer-service oriented business, one in which the customer depends on the professionalism of the PMQ and the reputation of the PMQ, it is also definitely a skill and stylistically based craft business.
Figure 5.5. PMQ Selection Factors. This bar chart illustrates the factors that influence a customer’s decision to employ a specific PMQ.
Quilting Designs and Decisions

As discussed in Chapter III, customers may choose from many different styles and modes of machine quilting. The customer respondents were asked to select their preferred styles from quilting variables offered, which were pantographs, free-motion/hand-guided, computer-guided, and the open-ended option of other. There is much overlap in the responses, but a clear ranking is established (see figure 5.6). The majority of the respondents, 88 percent (233), liked the free-motion/hand-guided style. Forty-eight percent (127) of the respondents cited pantographs as a favored style, and 30 percent (79) cited computer-guided designs. Included in the open-ended option were the comments of custom and heirloom as specifications on free-motion. Jan Woods of Pennsylvania noted in the open-ended response that she employs her PMQ for a unique style – basting her quilts for hand-quilting. This would involve the PMQ machine-tacking the quilt sandwich at regular intervals to eliminate that portion of preparation work for Woods.

This quilting style preference and the designs can be fully the decision of the customer quiltmaker, or solely the PMQ’s decision or arrived at together as a partnership decision. In an open-ended response regarding their interactions with the PMQs, the customers described, in their own words, whether they specify to the PMQ how they want the quilt quilted; or if they leave all quilting decisions up to the PMQ; or if they discuss and design collaboratively (see figure 5.7). Reflecting the strengths of the partnerships, 83 percent (220) of the customers work with their PMQs, in tandem, to design the quilting motifs used on the quilt. This collaboration is enriching and cements the shared ownership of each quilted piece between the quiltmaker and the PMQ. Joni
Figure 5.6. Quilting Styles Preferred. This bar chart illustrates customers’ preferred quilting styles.
Figure 5.7. Quilting Design Decision Input. This pie chart illustrates the quilting design process.
Strother of California remarked, "I explain what I want and the quilter makes suggestions and clarifies what I'm saying. I may alter my choices based on what the quilter suggests, or I may not." Deb Lybarger described her association with PMQs, particularly one. She said:

I have had a good relationship with all the ladies who have quilted for me. I have an exceptionally good relationship with my present quilter. I can always (and I do) give her ideas as to what I do and do not want on my quilts. I then listen to any suggestions or ideas that she has. We discuss and decide on each quilt what the design will be, the thread color and type that will be used on the front and the back of the quilt, etc. She is phenomenal and her designs just blow my mind. Many of the quilts I give to her for quilting I just give her carte blanche to "have fun" and just "do whatever she wants to do". I have never been disappointed and the recipients of my quilts are just amazed at what she can do. We are very good friends now - even my husband.

The work of Kate Ruper of Delaware was similarly enhanced by a creative PMQ. Ruper commented:

I try to explain what my vision for the quilt is, and I listen to their suggestions. One of the professional quilters I use sparingly because she is more expensive changed what she did from what we had discussed. She had taken a class and wanted to try something new. This is where the rapport comes into play. I had encouraged her to do what she wanted within some guidelines - I didn't want an all over design and I wanted the borders to be treated separately. The quilt was given to one of my sons who had married a quilter and they were both awed by it.

Renée Kanas of Florida is very attached to her quilts, so she invests time and consideration into the relationship with her PMQ and the decisions they make together. She remarked:

I have tried to have a very good rapport with my quilter. She is going to quilt my babies. So far, knock on wood, I have been able to interact very well. Every quilt that I have taken in to be quilted, the quilter and I spent lots of time picking out the pattern, thread, etc. Sometimes I pick the pattern, sometimes they do and sometimes both. My current quilter likes to know what I'm thinking, so she can guide me to the right quilt pattern. The quilts always come out looking wonderful.
Eleven percent (28) of the customers remarked that, due to the expertise of the professionally trained quilter, they place all quilting design decisions in the hands of the PMQ. Kimberly Montagnese of Ohio reported that she “mostly trust[s] them. After all, that’s why they put in all that continuing education and expense, and have a great reputation.”46 Robin Caruso of North Carolina likes “the quilt to speak to [the PMQ].”47 Bonnie Patterson of Virginia remarked, “I let them do what looked best to them, they are professionals.”48 Amy Scheib of Maryland commented, “99% of the time I leave it up to them. I am paying for more than [the quilting process], I am also paying for their knowledge of what would work with the style of fabric, piecing, appliqué, etc.”49

Only 5 percent (14) give specific quilting instructions to their PMQs, for a variety of reasons. Mary Mularo of Ohio had an unfortunate experience after trusting the judgment of a PMQ. She reported:

I learned by experience to discuss specifically what I want or what their ideas are. I was very dissatisfied the first time when I went solely by word of mouth and told her to do what seems right, that the quilting will "make the quilt." I relied on the person's good taste and her choices would not have been mine.50

For Kathy Hummel of Ohio, due to the high cost of custom free-motion quilting, she is currently opting for pantograph, all-over quilting.51 She said:

In the beginning, I left much of thequilting decisions up to my quilter. Currently, I have requested pantographs on several quilts because of the cost of custom quilting. I have decided that, unless a quilt merits custom quilting for a specific reason (ie entry in a competition, or a special gift for someone), pantographs serve the purpose of making the quilt sandwich just fine. And frankly, there are many wonderful pantographs available.52

As with any relationship, communications and trust between the customers and the PMQs are keys for success. The PMQs are providing a valuable and appreciated
service. They are also partnering with the quiltmaker in a creative production which will be a source of pride and satisfaction for the quiltmaker. The final quilt will be reflective of the quiltmaker’s identity, so the work of the PMQ becomes inherently vital to the quiltmaker. Thus, the relationship is uniquely and extraordinarily important to both parties. A successful relationship will provide a source of pride for the quiltmaker and repeat business for the PMQ.

Collaboration Repetition

There are numerous reasons that cause a quiltmaker to become a “repeat” customer of a particular PMQ (see figure 5.8). The overwhelming reason that customers return to a PMQ is the quality and workmanship provided, cited by 75 percent (198) of the respondents. The quality and workmanship of the quilting are a highly-appreciated contribution made to the final quilt because they will enhance the work of the quiltmaker. A single quilt becomes a joint effort, one in which ownership and pride are shared, resulting in a noteworthy partnering between quiltmaker and PMQ. The reaction of Donna Kern of Ohio to a quilt completed by her PMQ indicates the importance of this collaboration. She remarked:

She's [her PMQ] good - really, really good. I cried when she returned my first quilt, and I am still amazed at what she can do to my quilts. I do not have every quilt I make professionally quilted. I quilt many of my own, but I really am an amateur compared to what she does to my quilt tops!53

Leslie Sumner of Maryland recognized that the PMQ’s work complements and completes her own work, and the quality of the quilting is a source of pride for both the quiltmaker and the PMQ. She said:
Figure 5.8. Reasons for Re-hiring. Once located and selected, a customer’s decision to work with a PMQ are influenced by the factors illustrated in the above bar chart.
Quality of workmanship – no pleating or puckering on the back (or front!). Ideas that really make the quilt a perfect product. Speed isn't essential but it is nice not to have to wait weeks to get it back. I like it when the longarmer is excited to show me what she has done – it becomes a joint project that she takes pride in too.54

Cecelia Morris of Ohio explained, “Quality of the machine quilting is the most important aspect. I have put a lot of work into making the quilt top and I want that to be reflected in the workmanship of the machine quilting.”55 Kim Haynes of Tennessee commented:

The person I return to again and again does truly beautiful work, and her work is very professional -- the quilt is quilted edge to edge, quilted evenly, no puckers, and her artistry makes my top a real work of art. I have used her for both pantographs and custom quilting and even her pantographs are better than other people's.56

Beverly Peterson of South Dakota wants her PMQ to share her fondness for her quilt and have that reflected in her work. She said:

I hope to find a quilter whose inspiration for my quilt surpasses what I expected! . . . I like a machine quilter to demonstrate that at the time she is doing my quilt that it is the ‘greatest quilt in the world.’ I appreciate a machine quilter who is true to her word when she gives me the approximate finish time of the project.57

Kate Mayer Tekampe of Illinois returned to her PMQ several times. She explained:

I was absolutely thrilled with her work on the first quilt I took to her, and impressed by the price as well (I found it very reasonable). I continued to see the quality of her work on others’ quilts too, and knew she would do a good job on my next quilt. And she did do a great job on my next two quilts. Additionally, I like that she continues her (formal and informal) quilting education and is always learning new techniques to offer her customers. And, she has now won several awards in machine quilting.58

Quiltmakers acknowledged the considerable contribution a PMQ can make to the visual appeal of a quilt. Their work is artistic. Deb Lybarger of Kansas remarked:

I love to make quilts and I will never get them finished if I do not make use of the machine quilter(s). I love to design and piece so why not pay them to do what they do best. I end up with a wonderful quilt to keep or give to someone dear. I
always give credit verbally and on the label as to who did the quilting. Also, I get to enjoy many more quilts and give many more gifts during my lifetime!59

Kate Ruper of Delaware said, “I have a friend who designs jewelry. She says there is a difference between artist and craftsman. I'm a competent craftsman, but artistry makes my heart sing. [My PMQ] is an artist with her longarm.”60

While the workmanship is paramount to ensure repeat customers, this is a business relationship, and customers also appreciate excellent business practices and a high level of professionalism by their PMQs. Additional aspects that customers consider when returning for additional services include the price of the services, turnaround time, the convenience afforded by working with specific PMQs, their style, their schedule, and their reliability in fulfilling promises. Several quiltmakers noted that their own increased productivity caused them to return. Excellent business practices will be rewarded with repeat business.

Liz Buniski of New York commented, “Her work was excellent. Designs fit the style of the quilt. She delivered the work in the time frame that she stated. Her price for the work is fair. Her work area is clean and neat.”61 Sharon Chase of Ohio responded:

Her prices are reasonable, she does beautiful quilting, and her designs fit the quilt. She will work with my time frame, too. If I know I have a wedding coming up within the next year, I will notify her, and she will slot my quilt in so that I can finish binding it in time for the event. It feels like we are a good team.62

Rebecca Roberts of West Virginia reported that her PMQ “has been a quilter for quite some time and often has a different perspective that I find interesting. She is easy to work with, and always has my quilts done when she says she will. The results are always beautiful.”63 Kathleen Whitney of New York summed up the impact of professionalism
on her willingness to return to a PMQ with this response: “Professionalism, dependability, quality of work, accommodation all contribute to my repeat business.”

The availability of professional machine quilting means more quilts are finished, and the quiltmaker is more productive. That simple reason results in customers returning to the PMQ for additional quilting services. Melissa Kristufek of Illinois commented, “I like to produce about 10-20 quilts a year but could never make that many if I had to machine quilt them as well.” Kristy Burleyson said, “I can finish more quilts this way. Especially when making them for Christmas gifts. One year I made 7 quilts for Christmas - no way could I have completed them.” Carole Ralston of Ohio remarked, “The joy and satisfaction of seeing the finished product of my long hours and love put into the piecing becoming a beautiful completed project.”

Relationship Disappointments

Because this relationship is so vital to the quiltmakers, it can sometimes become tenuous, and disappointments have occurred. Slightly more than half of the customer respondents, 52 percent (139), recorded occasions of disappointment in their associations with PMQs. Just as the primary motivation for returning to a PMQ is the high quality and workmanship of the quilting, the primary source of customer disappointments is the low quality and workmanship of the quilting. Additional reasons for disappointment included concerns about price, style, and aspects of the business professional practices of the PMQs.

Quiltmakers dealt with the disappointments in varying manners. Some respondents talked with the PMQ; some did not. Some quiltmakers removed the work
and had it redone, either by themselves or another PMQ; some left it as is. Some quilters commented that they never employed that PMQ again; others gave the PMQ another opportunity. Some quilters were devastated; some chalked it up to experience. The descriptions of the disappointments shed light on how the relationships might be improved as the industry evolves.⁶⁸

Quality is vital. One quilter related:

I tried a new quilter. She didn't take notes on my quilting ideas, and she had my quilt forever, it seemed, before she began even working on it. It was AWFUL! I paid her, said very little to her, then painstakingly took it all out. I had my usual quilter redo it later, when she had time, and now I love it! I am glad that lady no longer lives in this area.⁶⁹

As part of the quilting community, the quality from one quilt to another will be compared. Another quilter told this story:

A friend and I made the same quilt and we each took them to the same quilter but at different times. Hers was done 1st. Hers came back with beautiful quilting that was different between each row. It was a row by row quilt. When I got mine back I was expecting to see the same kind of work but my was very plain and just some swirls. We paid the same price. I just let it go and decided to go to someone else for my quilting.⁷⁰

Listening to the customer is key. A quilter related, “I left a quilt with thread, picked a pattern and the professional decided to ignore both things we agreed on and did what she wanted. I paid. Every time I look at the quilt I think of what happened but never went to her again or recommended her.”⁷¹

The hygiene of the PMQs and their studios is one of the issues reported, including pet hair and smoke odor. One respondent reported:

I picked up a quilt that was covered in dog hair and the quilting had been done in a darker shade than I selected. The quilting showed up more than the star I had put together. I was very unhappy with the whole thing. I did not say anything, however, as this particular lady presented it to me at our guild meeting. I did not
have a contract with this lady so I didn't do anything. I just have not been a repeat customer.\textsuperscript{72}

The style of the quilting can be a source of disappointment. A customer said:

One of my first quilts, about number 5 or 6 was extremely disappointing. I had hand appliquéd the queen size top and the "professional quilter" randomly quilted all over the design. I was heartbroken. A friend came and helped me take out all the quilting and I hand quilted it. I should have taken it back and probably requested a refund, but this was a friend and I did not want to create a problem for her in the quilt guild. Needless to say she has never quilted for me since.\textsuperscript{73}

Apparent damage is tremendously upsetting to a customer, as a quilter explained:

I got a couple of tops back that were badly stretched and one that had stitches ripped out that had make little marks on the quilt top. I expect they will eventually fray and ravel. I should have complained to the quilter, however the damage was already done – what could they do? I certainly did not send any more quilts to them and did not recommend them to anyone else.\textsuperscript{74}

Not all disappointments are the fault of the PMQ. The quality of materials in the quilt can also be a factor. Another quilter commented:

I had 3 quilts quilted in a 10 week period. The first and third ones came out very nice but the second had some pulled threads and a few small puckers on the back. She pointed them out and attributed it to the type of batting I had provided. It was lower quality batting so I learned my lesson, and overall the flaws weren't too noticeable on that quilt. I appreciated that she showed me the puckers and explained how they happened instead of just packaging up the quilt and taking my check without saying anything. I like that she takes the time to explain to me how machine quilting works.\textsuperscript{75}

Many of the customers who reported that they did not share their displeasure with the PMQ were concerned about the reaction. One customer remarked, "I suppose I should say something to the quilters, but it's easier to just not go back to them."\textsuperscript{76}

Another quilter did not point out the flaws to the PMQ, but will not hesitate to discuss her displeasure within her quilting community. She explained, "I did nothing and
said nothing. What good would it have done? The quilt was finished. I will never go back to this pro, and if anyone asks I will let them know why.”  

One customer said,

I didn't tell the quilter but I haven't used her again. I also took out some stitches she put in. She lives far away so that makes it inconvenient for both of us, so I think she feels the distance is the problem. I suppose I should have discussed my problems with her but I'm chicken to criticize someone else. I know I couldn't do better. 

Some PMQs take criticism well and appreciate the feedback. One quiltmaker had a constructive conversation with her PMQ. She reported, “she knew [that I was disappointed] the minute I saw the quilt. We discussed ways to fix it and she was apologetic which meant a lot to me.”  

Another quiltmaker related:

I have usually been happy but I have had one quilt where the starts and stops were not done well. I brought it up to her and she did so much better the next time and she was grateful that I pointed it out to her. She has improved so much and I recommend her quite often. 

Other PMQs do not appreciate negative comments. Some quiltmakers reported nasty consequences because of their complaints. One quilter said, “I told the LAQ that I was disappointed, and why. She didn't take it well. [The PMQ asserted that] ‘all my other customers are very satisfied!’ which of course was not my concern. :-)” 

The work of the PMQ becomes so much a part of the final quilt that communication is vitally important, a lesson learned by many quiltmakers. One customer explained:

I was disappointed once but had left the quilt design up to the quilter so I didn't and couldn't complain. I paid for the quilt and learned a lesson about being more communicative about what I expected. I also have learned to specify the thread color that will be used because I have had some unusual results from that as well.
Another said:

[I] pointed out areas that were not "up to par" or less than satisfactory. I have not requested my money back as she has spent a good deal of time on the piece. I learn how to communicate my ideas and concepts better and she listens more closely to her next client. I try to point out something positive in her work. 83

Another quilter described the process that she now employs when she submits a quilt to a PMQ to ensure that the end result is as expected. She explained:

So far I've not been disappointed enough to kick up a fuss. But twice I've paid for custom work and been quite underwhelmed. Once the quilter was a pretty well-known quilter and the work on her website is great. Looking at my quilt, I would have thought someone else did the work. It was very amateurish and "jerky". The stitching was not smooth at all. Now I try to be more specific about what I want and come to a clear understanding with the LA Quilter. I'm still constantly amazed at the lack of professionalism among LA Quilters. I've never had a LA Quilter measure a top or back that I provided, and rarely have I seen one use a take-in sheet. But since I now know that most LA Quilters don't have much business background, I know to write stuff down myself, so there is less likely to be a surprise at the end. 84

Termination of a Partnership

Moving from disappointments to termination may not be a long stretch, with one possibly leading to the next. Employing the services of a PMQ is a highly personal decision, based on a myriad of reasons and the reasons for terminations of a PMQ are as multi-layered and individual. Approximately half of the total customer respondents, 52 percent (138), recorded that, at some point, they had made the decision to no longer work with a specific PMQ. Though the respondent rate of the terminations equals that of the disappointments, both are 52 percent, it cannot be assumed that every disappointment results in a termination and every termination is a result of a disappointment. The most prevalent reason cited by customers for terminating a PMQ is the geographic distance between the quilter and her PMQ. Somewhat surprisingly, the primary termination
theme is related to a convenience factor rather than a product or process aspect. Distance can become an insurmountable factor, resulting in the termination of a relationship, in a variety of ways: the customer or the PMQ may move; a closer PMQ may enter the industry; connecting, especially via shipping quilt tops, can become difficult, costly, or inconvenient. One quiltmaker explained:

I have never had to terminate my relationship with my professional machine quilter for any reason other than I am moving out of state. When I move to different states I usually try to find a local quilter so that I do not have the stress and worry of mailing quilts back and forth to have that done.85

Another customer remarked, “I once used a professional quilter who lived about 2 hours away but was picking up quilts at a shop that was about half way between us. When the shop went out of business I stopped using her because it was too inconvenient to get to her.”86 The distance was daunting to another quiltmaker who explained, “I relocated from California to WV. It became too costly (and too risky) to mail back and forth. Although, I still correspond with her by e-mail!”87

The quality and workmanship of the quilting was the most cited reason for rehiring a PMQ and also the most cited source of customer disappointment. It is no surprise, therefore, that quality is the second most frequently cited reason for the termination of a PMQ. A quiltmaker reported:

One machine quilter was recommended in a quilt shop I sometimes use and she did a pantograph of oak leaves on a quilt that used homespun. The pattern was skewed quite badly and I told the quilt shop about it. The quilter offered to re-do it by taking out the stitching which I knew would probably leave holes. I made another quilt to give to the person I was making it for, had someone else quilt it, and kept the [poorly quilted] quilt.88

Redundant or repetitive quilting may leave a customer bored and dissatisfied. Poor workmanship led to several terminations. A quiltmaker remarked:
I left a machine quilter because she did the same old pantographs over and over and I got bored with them. I think she did too because her work started to get sloppy and not hold up to use. Well that is job performance isn't it. Then I just didn't want to deal with her sloppy performance and have to have a relationship where I am complaining.\(^\text{89}\)

Quality and distance were joint factors for another quiltmaker who remarked:

the only one I terminated was the one who did a crummy job. There is a fabulous quilter [where I used to live]. I rarely use because while his work is genius, the costs of postage make it too expensive for anything other than my best tops. When I lived there he did all my quilts.

The business practices involving the turn-around time and prices charged also influenced termination decisions. Quiltmakers want their quilts quilted in a timely fashion, or even within the time-frame promised, at a price they can afford. One quiltmaker reported:

My very first quilter several years ago before [joining my current guild], did not meet the time frame she said she would, and it was almost a year before I got my wall hanging back. This was before I knew anything about professional quilters. When I did get it back, I knew in my heart that I could have done so much better. The icing on the cake was that she didn't even apologize about the multiple delays that stretched into a year, nor did she offer to take anything off the charge. I felt like I had been used. Not a good feeling.\(^\text{90}\)

One quiltmaker was happy with the quality and style of quilting from one PMQ, but the distance, cost, and time precluded her re-employing this PMQ. She related that she “found someone much closer to home that is lots less expensive and has a turn-around time of about a month instead of 4-5 months. If I have something truly special though I will still go back.”\(^\text{91}\) Another quiltmaker said, “One had a very long turn-around time but was quite reasonable. Another was very expensive but that did not bother me - the problem was the quilts were never ready when promised. I would have preferred her be honest as to the turn around time.”\(^\text{92}\) For another quiltmaker, communication with the
PMQ failed, as she described, “one took about 6 months to finish a quilt for me. I received no calls and she did not return my calls. I finally went and just picked up the quilt.”93

In tough economic times, the total expense of any quiltmaking project is often analyzed. For many quilters, having a quilt finished professionally can become a luxury that must be forfeited. A quilter explained:

While I haven't terminated my relationship with her, I have not sent her any additional quilts because I have not been able to justify the cost. I have one finished top that I do want machine quilted (a queen sized T-shirt quilt), but because I don't have plans to use the quilt right away, I will store it until I have the funds to have it quilted. I am currently working on another queen sized top that I hope to send to her by the end of the month. I want it professionally quilted because I plan to use it daily on my bed and I would like it finished quickly. I justify the expense because my current (store bought) bedquilt is worn out and I would have replaced it with another store bought quilt in the next month or so.94

Most customers did not begrudge the PMQs the value of their services; it was simply a matter of budget constraints. A quilter commented:

Having a quilt done by a truly gifted Pro is expensive. It should be, since they are worth the money, but I can't afford to do that very often. I'm learning how to machine quilt myself and have been satisfied with some of my work, so I'll try to get better. I may still choose to hire work done, but it depends on the quilt and the situation. Cost is a factor, as much as the skill of the Pro is, too.95

The cost of having a quilt quilted had forced some quilters to seek less costly avenues for finishing their quilts. The previous quilter was not alone in her efforts to learn to quilt her tops on her own. Learning to machine quilt themselves is among the additional reasons cited for terminating a PMQ, along with the poor hygiene and personality of the PMQ, and the PMQ leaving the industry.

Disappointments and terminations are inevitable in any industry, most especially in a customer service-oriented industry. Whether communication issues or unreasonable
expectations from either party are at fault, a business based on customer satisfaction will undoubtedly have examples of unsatisfied customers. The positive aspects and significant contributions of this industry are not overshadowed by the few examples of discontentment. The customers of the PMQs play a vital role in the industry helping to sustain and expand it. Without the customers, there would be no cottage industry of providing professional machine-quilting services. The voices of the customers illuminate areas for possible improvement.

Industry Changes Desired

The PMQ industry is relatively new and is still evolving. Many of the customers have become more discerning due to the disappointments they may have experienced, the increased availability of PMQs in their area, and, possibly, increased knowledge and expectations about what PMQs can offer. The suggestions of the customers regarding changes they would make to the industry addressed many aspects of the industry from technology and the equipment to the practices of PMQs themselves. Some of the suggestions were specific to the PMQs known to the customers; some referred to the geographic areas in which the customers lived. Other suggestions were broader and related to the attitudes of the worldwide contemporary quilt movement including the desire for more recognition of the artistic attributes of machine quilting along with concerns about machine quilting thriving to the possible detriment of hand-quilting.

Several customers proposed changes specific to the overall professionalism of the PMQs. Dorothy Young of TX said:

Raise its level of professionalism. For better or for worse, most LA Quilters I've encountered (on-line and in person) are hobbyists who moved into the
professional arena. Most have never been business women in any professional sense. Either they've not worked outside the home, or their jobs have not given them the skills (procurement, marketing, accounting, estimating, project management) to make their quilting businesses a success. Most seem to feel guilty or act apologetic when they present a bill. I think this is partly the "woman thing" but partly because they lack the self confidence professional education, training and experience would lend to them. I'm not sure how to change this. I've never heard of a child deciding to be a LA Quilter, then growing up, buying a machine and starting a business. Most LA Quilters still come to the profession from the hobby side of quilting.96

Training and certifications leading to national standards were suggested. Patricia Hall of Ohio remarked:

I think there should be different levels [of PMQs] and know which level you are dealing with. I do not believe that because you accept $ for your work does not make you a professional by any stretch. You earn that one by your work and how good you are at it. Like a person is excellent at appliqué or a great piecer. Some of us are better at one aspect of the quilt making process. I now call myself a topper. I used to be a quilt maker as I did every step of the quilt myself. I no longer hand quilt much of anything. I hire it out as well the machine quilting.97

Several suggested a drop in price for the machine-quilting services to make it more affordable. For many, however, this request was associated with the quilter’s budget, not the value of the services provided. Bonnie Biller of Ohio said, “I make more quilt tops than I can afford to have quilted, so seeing it become less expensive would be nice for me, but not so for the quilter. So I guess everything will remain status quo.”98 Judith Stough of Ohio remarked, “It would be nice if it could be done cheaper but that is looking from my view point. I do not think they (most of them) overcharge after all their time is worth a great deal.”99 Rae Marek of Ohio related, “I would like to see it slightly less expensive with all that is going on in the world today – it is not a necessity, although quilting does bring a sense of relaxation and escape from reality.”100
To combat the high cost of paying a PMQ, there were wishes that the equipment costs could be lowered in order to help the quiltmakers to quilt their own tops or to allow them to join the industry as PMQs. Ruth Hollandsworth of West Virginia said:

Quality professional quilting machines are very costly. Which makes the prices paid to professional machines quilters very high. I would hope that the industry would like to see more quilters have their own machines by selling in volume at lower prices rather than a few professional quilters who can afford the big price tag. Also, some manufacturers only sell the high price models. Maybe they could manufacture a "compact" model at a more affordable price.  

Melanie Elliott of Maryland said, “I would love to start my own business but the equipment is very expensive! We need more long arm machine quilters in our area! I've sent my quilts as far as 150 miles to have one done in the time frame I needed it!”

The industry of the PMQs, their services, and their equipment will continue to change with developments in the technology, the customers, the supplies, and the preferences of the contemporary quilt movement. Scarlett Rose of California explained well how the changes and the future should be approached:

There are issues that are in the process of being sorted out, but that's true for any industry. Those who make the tops need to talk to their Pros and make sure both sides understand where each is and what's expected. The same applies to the Pros. If they want something from the person who supplies the top, then they need to make sure it's spelled out. Communication is key.

As it has evolved, the cottage industry of professional machine-quilting services has had an undeniable impact on both the PMQs and the quiltmaker customers, providing income to one and important quilting services to the other. The vitality and integral nature of the collaborative relationship has molded and shaped the quiltmaker within the contemporary quilt movement.
Impact on the Quiltmakers

In three decades of the contemporary quilt movement, the attitude towards machine quilting has shifted dramatically. Forty years ago, quiltmakers desired to emulate the quilting processes of their ancestors in an idealized, pure, authentic manner and, as such, eschewed machine quilting as a suitable quilting process. This denunciation of machine quilting ameliorated, however, as the contemporary quilt movement ensued. This attitudinal shift provided the impetus for the establishment of professional machine-quilting services and has supported the cottage industry of the PMQs. Changing attitudes towards machine quilting were instrumental in initiating a thriving professional machine-quilting services industry. Until the machine-quilting process was accepted, providing the service was not a feasible enterprise.

This study attempted to answer further questions about this new cottage industry. As the cottage industry grew, did its presence in the quiltmaking community encourage further amelioration of the poor image of machine quilting? Was this a positive influence on the quiltmakers? Also, as more and more quiltmakers employed the PMQs, did their quiltmaking endeavors increase as a result of the collaborative relationship? Did the alleviation of this one quilting step among the litany of quiltmaking processes promote more quiltmaking? The survey probed how the services of the PMQs impacted customers’ attitudes towards machine quilting as an artform since they first began quiltmaking and whether the availability of these services had any impact on the quiltmakers’ quilt production levels.
Attitude towards Machine Quilting

An open-ended survey question asked specifically if the quiltmaker had experienced a change in attitude toward machine quilting. Assessing the attitudinal changes of the individuals helped illuminate the changes to the overall quiltmaking community. The majority of respondents, 60 percent (158), noted that their attitude towards machine quilting had changed positively since they had first become a quiltmaker. This represents a significant attitudinal change – one that may have been in direct conflict with what they had been taught as the proper way to finish a quilt – and correlates directly with the overall quiltmaking community. The complete data set of responses to this question was evaluated for evidence of overall positive perception towards machine quilting, whether a change was involved or the attitude was extant. The results indicated an 86 percent (226) positive attitude toward machinequilting. These results may be consequential to this response group, in that the respondents consist of a group of customers who have purchased machine-quilting services and are, therefore, presumably predisposed to a positive attitude toward it.

Jennifer Bonner of Ohio remarked, “Yes, [I] started out as a hand quilter. The group I quilted with was very traditional and was dismissive of machine quilting. However, the more I saw at shows, the more I liked the idea. Now, I think some of the machine quilting that I see is spectacular in its own right.”104 Ruthann Collins of Ohio commented, “I was convinced by older quilters, that it is not "real" quilting if you did not quilt by hand. I have seen too many beautiful quilts that are machine quilted. In some cases it is because of the machine quilting that brings these tops to life.”105 Jay Johnson of California responded:
When I first started, ignorant child that I was, I thought machine quilting was a cop-out used by vendors who wanted to mass-produce quilts to sell. In truth, they often looked just like the "comforters" sold at the discount chains. In the last 20 years, though, machine quilting has advanced to art form status, and so many quilts have become works of art, often solely due to the machine quilting that finishes them. Poor machine quilting can ruin a quilt, but fine work really does make the quilt unique and beautiful.\textsuperscript{106}

An early participant in the revival, Marilyn Maher of West Virginia related the changes she experienced. She said:

I started quilting in 1975. Everything was done by hand. In fact, I made my templates out of cardboard. We did not have rotary cutters and all the wonderful "toys" that are now available. There was only one quilt book in our library. I was self taught in the beginning. My background was in Home Economics and my field was clothing and textiles. I did a lot of sewing and needlework for many years. I later took classes and I do continue to do so. I was convinced in the early years that the only way quilts should be done was by hand and I followed that theory for a number of years. As time has gone by, the machine quilters have developed many skills and developed many designs for continuous stitching, etc. I have totally changed my opinions about machine quilting.\textsuperscript{107}

Another long-term quilter, Jane Coleman of Virginia, stated:

Since machine quilting is more accepted within the quilting community, more professional quilters are expanding their range of what they will do with quilts. When I started quilting, only hand quilted quilts were shown and machine quilted quilts were frowned upon (30 years ago).\textsuperscript{108}

Eileen Simon has participated in the movement since the earliest days of the revival. She related:

I have been quilting since 1976. When machine quilting first hit the scene it looked like mattress pad patterns because that's what it was. A friend was one of the first to enter a beautifully machine quilted quilt in state fair that she had quilted on her home sewing machine. The entry people told her she would have to put it in "the bedspread division". She didn't enter her quilt. Now machine quilting is as beautiful as hand quilting. In most major shows quilts are now judged regardless of how they are quilted.\textsuperscript{109}
Judie Bigge of Ohio commented:

I used to believe that hand quilting was the only way to quilt. I still believe that hand quilting is very beautiful. However, machine quilting no longer has to take a back seat. It has evolved into an art unto itself. I think that Harriet Hargrave has really helped quilters to see that machine quilting can be just as beautiful as that done by hand.\textsuperscript{110}

Nancy Badertscher of Virginia is a newcomer to quiltmaking, and, yet, her attitude toward machine quilting has been altered. She explained:

I started out 3 years ago thinking that the only kind of quilting to do was handquilting. I still do that some, but would not get nearly as much done if I had to do that on all my quilts. One of my daughters is now quilting and she loves to do free-motion quilting. I have a much greater appreciation of that since she is doing it.\textsuperscript{111}

As more and more individual quiltmakers shifted their attitudes towards machine quilting, local quiltmaking communities reflected these same shifts. Technological developments of all kinds contributed to the adoption of new techniques by the quiltmaking community. The knowledge that a process or approach was acceptable in the eyes of the community bestowed a type of peer permission to use it. Diane Wagenhals of Pennsylvania said, “It seemed a little like "cheating" but because I do all the rest and the results are so wonderful it has made me feel it is acceptable to pay a machine quilter. Also peer acceptance and approval has contributed to this attitude.”\textsuperscript{112}

Karen O’Brien of Mississippi remarked:

When I made my first quilt I hand pieced and hand quilted it. Then a friend said, "even the Amish women machine piece." So I started machine piecing and hand quilting. This speeded everything up and I could have more than one project going at a time. When rotary cutters appeared- well, that was a gift to any quilter and I embraced them so production went up. So the move to machine quilting appeared to be a natural move. I was hesitant until I consulted my trusted quilting friends. Now I am more comfortable and I know what to ask a professional quilter: to see samples, have a clear idea of prices and time line. Plus, there are
more people willing to do small projects, items like table runners, placemats, and wall hangings, when they do not have a large quilt in the machine.¹¹³

W. R. Bennington of West Virginia said, “I recall being influenced by the norms that the only true quilt was a handquilted one. I am constantly amazed at the caliber of the work, the efficiency of it and can't help but realize that our foremothers would have quickly embraced this technology had it been available.”¹¹⁴

Numerous respondents, who reported a positive perception, said that they had “always” appreciated machine quilting. There was no transformation, as such, since the respondents already respected, admired, and even enjoyed machine quilting. Sharon DeGrave of Washington remarked, “I was never a purist - even in the 1980s I was open to machine quilting - just chicken to try it. I have seen spectacular machine quilting that is every bit as impressive and intricate as hand quilting.”¹¹⁵ Sharon Zeiner of Texas said, “My feeling is that if my Grandmothers had had such a machine, they would have used it! I think a quilt top machine pieced or appliquéd and machine quilted is still a quilt!”¹¹⁶ Judith Stough of Ohio voiced the same beliefs about her grandmother’s probable embrace of today’s technology. She commented:

I cannot say my attitude has changed. I always thought machine quilting was an art form. I have told many of my friends, who are purist, that my grandmother (who had a reputation as being an excellent hand quilter) was no dummy. If she had a machine as fancy as they are today and could do the things these machines do she would have been the first in line to get one. It still takes a great deal of skill. I started taking my quilts to a gal that was just getting into the business. She has improved over the years. I marvel at her accomplishments.¹¹⁷

Sandy Brawner, a quilt shop owner from Texas, commented:

We have always appreciated machine quilting here at our shop and had quilters who do a super job. When we first opened, in 1995, the quilts in the Dallas Quilt Celebration were mostly hand quilted and the machine quilted ones were shunned. Now the majority are machine quilted and it is well accepted.¹¹⁸
Janet Harms of South Dakota explained:

I have always appreciated the beauty machine quilting gives to a quilt. However, I have 2 friends who only hand quilt and they have a difficult time giving up their project to someone else. They feel they truly didn't do the whole thing themselves, but that doesn't bother me. These 2 women do beautiful hand-quilting and actually get alot done, so good for them, but it is not for me.119

Nicki Warnkey of Wisconsin spoke of being open to both hand and machine quilting.

She commented, “I started quilting in 1996, so I didn't have the "hang-up" about machine quilted quilts. I think it's fine, and I also think hand quilting is fine. It's up to the quilter how she wants to finish her quilt.”120 Donna Kern of Ohio was told she was doing it “wrong.” She related:

I didn't start quilting until late in my life, so I really don't know about quilting before the machine became so important. When I started about 10 years ago, my mother, who had made quilts by hand, said that I was cheating because I was piecing and quilting on the machine!121

Some quiltmakers were never told that machine quilting was inadequate. Dianna Storck of Maryland said:

I've only been quilting since 2001. Most of my friends who got me into this were not hand quilters so I never had the attitude I've seen in some quilters that it HAS to be hand quilted to be a "real" quilt. I have an appreciation of hand quilting but I think long arm quilting is its own art form.122

Several of the responses commented specifically on the designator “artform” in the survey question and alluded to the persistent debate between craft and art. Christine Sale of Maryland remarked:

I love quilting period. I find that through the years the patterns and fabric have made quilting more of an artform instead of something that covers your bed or to keep you warm (if this makes sense.) I tend to use the bright batiks in my quilts. It keeps me in a bright and cheery mood as I create my "masterpiece."123
Exposure to the pinnacle of quiltmaking endeavors in the overarching community will broaden the perspectives of all quiltmakers. That exposure can be a great motivator to personal growth. Mary Mularo of Ohio explained:

I started as a machine quilter after my retirement from teaching. I sewed since high school but never quilted. I didn't much think of it as an art form until seeing what people in my quilt guild were capable of doing and their knowledge and preferences in each specific aspect--the type of needle, the type of batting, how many stitches per inch, choices of fabrics, colors, designs, what brand and weight of thread. I realized that quilting is very much an art and can be very complicated! I saw the quilt show and museum in Paducah, and heard nationally known quilters and THEIR preferences. Wow. It is definitely an art. Then I had to back off and make it less complicated for ME--do my best, pay attention to methods that are respected in quilting and give good results, and know that even if I will not be at that standard I can still do things that please me and others like me.\textsuperscript{124}

The preponderance of a positive attitude towards machine quilting in this survey is confirmation of a broad shift in the quiltmaking community towards an acceptance of machine quilting. This shift was the first requisite for a thriving professional machine-quilting industry. The second requisite was the willingness of the individual quiltmaker to share, collaborate, or partner with a professional quilter to complete her highly personal endeavors. The next section explores the impact on the production levels of the quiltmakers as they turned to PMQs to collaborate in their quiltmaking efforts.

Production Changes

An open-ended survey question asked if the availability of professional machine-quilting services had impacted the respondents’ quilt-production levels. More than half of the respondents, 59 percent (157), acknowledged that by collaborating with a PMQ, their quiltmaking production had increased. Production can take many forms and the increase was evidenced in numerous ways. Increased production was not only related to
the quantity of quilts being made; it was also related to size and style. Not only are quiltmakers making more quilts, they are also attempting larger quilts and more difficult quilts knowing that there are PMQs who can easily and beautifully quilt all their quilts. Another aspect of increased production often repeated by the respondents is that, while the quiltmakers may not be constructing more quilt tops, they are producing more actual completed quilts. An improvement in the ability and skills of the quiltmakers themselves is also attributed to working with a PMQ.

Quiltmakers are constructing more and more quilt tops, knowing that there is a PMQ to actually quilt all the tops that they can produce. Citing the acceptability of this collaboration, Kathy Parker of Texas remarked, “I feel less guilty about starting new quilts and much less pressure, now that I have given myself permission to have my quilts professionally quilted.”125 Betty Tyler of Maryland noted:

It has definitely stepped up my production. Knowing that I have someone who can finish the quilts for me is a huge incentive for doing more projects. Before I hired a professional quilter I was very slow with hand quilting and finishing projects. Now I can focus on the parts of quilting I like best, which is the appliqué. I have also been encouraged to purchase a better sewing machine to try out some home machine quilting. The quilters I have used are so talented they are very inspirational!126

Nancy Warriner of Virginia said, “After starting to use the quilter's services, I began making about 40 quilts a year. I have slowed to 20/25 per year now but this has been over a period of 10 years.”127 Leslie Sumner of Maryland said she is “turning them out like a factory!!”128 Denise Oldham of Indiana commented, “I have made more quilts because I know they will be finished - not end up as UFO's in the closet.”129 Deb Lybarger of Kansas said:
This [professional machine quilting service] has been a godsend!! I try to get two quilts to my present quilter each month of the year. So, I get to sit and sew all of my free time now that my husband is retired and we are finished "moving" as far as we are concerned. My biggest concern is that she [her PMQ] does not get "burned out" as I would have piles of quilt tops but not finished if that ever happened.130

Jane McPhee of California related, “I make tops like crazy now and then save up the $ for my gal.”131 Kathy Hummel of Ohio commented:

. . . because I have a machine quilter available, I can continue to piece tops, by hand and/or machine and have a completed and usable item in a relatively short timeframe. Previously, the tops piled up and I would get on a very long list at church quilt groups that would hand quilt for a fee.132

Kate Mayer Tekampe of Illinois is unsure if she would even be a quilter without this service. She said, “I'm not sure it has impacted my quilt top production other than that if I couldn't have someone else quilt my tops, I may not bother making them in the first place or I would, but I'd have a whole bunch of unquilted tops lying around!”133

An increase in a slightly different production form was also cited by several respondents. The production of finished quilts, the ultimate goal of all quiltmaking endeavors, increased for many quilters. Pat Scully of Maryland related, “I'm producing about the same number of tops, but the percentage of tops that actually becomes finished quilts has risen dramatically. A backlog of close to 20 tops has been reduced to 2 or 3 that I don't feel I have the skills to do perfectly yet.”134 Kim Haynes of Tennessee remarked, “It hasn't impacted my production of quilt tops, but it certainly has allowed me to finish more quilts. I don't have much time to sew; now I can focus on design and piecing, the parts I enjoy, and leave the quilting to someone else.”135 A quilt shop owner from Texas, Sandy Brawner, related, “Instead of a closet of tops I have closets, both at home and at the shop and storage room, full of quilts.”136 Janet Harms of
South Dakota commented, “I am able to actually get things done. If I had to hand quilt things, I would have a bunch of tops. I had a quilt that was about 1/3 done with hand quilting....I finally tore it out and had it done by a long-armer.”¹³⁷ Like Kathy Parker of Texas, Kate Ruper of Delaware referred to guilt reduction when she said, “I don't think it has changed at all, I just feel less guilty because some things are actually getting done and going out to people.”¹³⁸

The availability of professional machine-quilting services has also altered the quilt sizes and styles that are being attempted by quiltmakers. Judy Collier of Pennsylvania said:

> It has made a tremendous impact on my quilt tops. As stated before, I always stayed with small size quilts. Since I have been using a professional quilter, I have made a queen size quilt top, two double bed tops and am now working on another queen. These would not have been possible otherwise, as I do not have the time to hand quilt. I work full time, have family, etc.¹³⁹

Nicki Warnkey of Wisconsin said, “I don't fear making large, king-sized quilts anymore because I know that I will actually be able to finish the whole quilt and not just the top.”¹⁴⁰ Marie Segares of New York agrees. She related, “It has made me more willing to consider making bed sized quilts rather than only wall hangings and throws.”¹⁴¹

Beverly Peterson of South Dakota related:

> Presently, in our area, we have a great number of professional machine quilters. In the past three years, the professionalism and ability of these quilters has risen phenomenally. I would undertake any pattern or creation and be able to secure a top notch machine quilter to finish the job.¹⁴²

Phyllis Poparad of Ohio remarked, “I know that I can sew a top that I would never attempt to quilt myself (either because of the size or the complexity of the design) and my
quilter would bring out the best in it.” Pam Scoville of New Jersey responded, “In number it has more than doubled and the complexity of the tops has increased.”

Productivity has increased also in the form of ability and skills. Partnering with a PMQ has encouraged many quiltmakers to develop their own skill sets, related to both quilt design and machine quilting itself. Reeze Hanson of Kansas remarked:

Two ways: I am more prolific because I do not have to worry about that part of the production process. Secondly, I have learned to do more of my own machine quilting, especially on smaller quilts, as the quilters I employ become more skilled and take on more customers, and thus, require longer waits to get quilts done.

Jennifer Higgins of Florida has begun to design her own quilts. She explained:

It has affected it greatly! My skill level has been able to advance from a beginning machine pieced quilter to one that is drafting patterns and designing and completing hand appliquéd quilt tops. I never would have gone this far in this art form if I had to hand quilt my own quilts.

Jay Johnson of California knows that the collaboration has improved her overall quiltmaking skills. She responded:

I FINISH more quilts as a result of their being machine quilted. So satisfying. I have very few tops waiting to be finished now. Mostly what's waiting are small quilts that need my own hand quilting to be finished. I also look at both patterns and finished tops critically, thinking about what designs will enhance them. My relationship with my quilter has taught me a tremendous amount, and made me a better quilter as a result.

The acceptance and appreciation of machine quilting were required stimuli to the establishment of the professional machine-quilting services industry. The willingness for quiltmakers to collaborate with a partner on the final product was the next impetus necessary for this business. Once established, for it to thrive, the consequences for the quiltmaking community had to also be positive, pervasive, and supportive. The responses and comments in the survey by the customers indicate overwhelmingly that the
collaboration is not only accepted, it is celebrated. The quiltmakers who employ the PMQs do so with enthusiasm and appreciation. These partnerships have increased the production of the customers and, therefore, their participation in the contemporary quilt movement, which has benefitted enormously from the availability of the services of the PMQ industry.

The cottage industry of professional machine quilting has become an integral part of the contemporary quilt movement. On a commercial level, it is a major business enterprise that contributes significantly to the overall quiltmaking industry, in the sale of equipment, supplies, and fabric. On a personal level, the industry supports and enriches the quiltmaking endeavors of its customers in two ways. First, the quiltmaker’s investment of time in the planning, preparing, and construction of a quilt top is rewarded by the contribution of completion of the actual quilt by the PMQ, fulfilling a source of pride and personal identity. Secondly, the appearance of the quilting enhances and beautifies the quilt. The partnership of quiltmaker and PMQ completes the quiltmaking process and brings the dream of the final product to fruition.

Having pushed through and past the initial denigration of machine quilting by the early participants of the quilt revival, today’s quiltmakers now practice, enjoy, and celebrate machine quilting in the contemporary quilt movement. The availability of PMQ services and the willingness of the quiltmaking community to collaborate with PMQs have resulted in a new tradition by which the quilt movement has grown and expanded. With this new tradition of machine quilting, the individual quiltmaker’s participation in the quilt movement has been enhanced and enriched.
Notes


2 See Chapter IV, notes 3 and 5.

3 The number in the parentheses is the numerical value of customer survey responses used to derive the percentage cited. Due to rounding in the calculations, the percentages may not total 100 percent.

4 See Appendix A for the University of Akron IRB Notice of Approval. All names are cited in this thesis with the express permission of the individual as granted in the permission section of the online survey. See Appendix B.

5 Catherine Sanderson, Navarre, OH, survey response, July 31, 2008.


7 Joyce McComas, Leonardtown, MD, survey response, July 31, 2008.

8 Susan Varesio, New Fairfield, CT, survey response, August 5, 2008.

9 Mardele Hawley, North Olmsted, OH, survey response, August 1, 2008.


14 Sharon Judkins, Hatfield, AR, survey response, August 6, 2008.

15 Lisa Ruch, Champaign, IL, survey response, August 6, 2008.


18 Marsha Hunt, Glenside, PA, survey response, August 6, 2008.
19 Leslie Sumner, Kettering, MD, survey response, August 4, 2008.
24 Iris [no last name provided], Amherst, OH, survey response, July 30, 2008.
27 Sue Jones, Maryville, TN, survey response, August 1, 2008.
29 Darlene Huettl, Rapid City, SD, survey response, August 9, 2008.
30 Margaret O’Reilly, Cleveland, OH, survey response, August 12, 2008.
33 Patricia C. Hall, West Salem, OH, survey response, July 30, 2008.
37 Amy Scheib, Montgomery, MD, survey response, July 31, 2008.
39 Jessica Alexandrakis, Fall River, MA, survey response, August 8, 2008.
Deborah Lancaster, La Jolla, CA, survey response, August 5, 2008.


Kate Ruper, Magnolia, DE, survey response, July 31, 2008.


Kimberly Montagnese, Amherst, OH, survey response, July 30, 2008.


Bonnie Patterson, Middletown, VA, survey response, August 5, 2008.

Scheib response.


See Chapter IV, page 86, for a detailed example of the cost of professional machine quilting services.

Hummel response.


Sumner response.

Cecelia Morris, Portsmouth, OH, survey response, August 1, 2008.


Beverly Peterson, Rapid City, SD, survey response, July 30, 2008.

Kate Mayer Tekampe, Lake Villa, IL, survey response, September 19, 2008.

Lybarger response.

Ruper response.


63 Rebecca Roberts, Martinsburg, WV, survey response, August 1, 2008.

64 Kathleen Whitney, Oswego, NY, survey response, August 6, 2008.

65 Melissa Kristufek, Naperville, IL, survey response, August 6, 2008.


68 In order to protect the privacy of the survey respondents and the subjects of their comments, the names and locations of the respondents were withheld in this section. The quotes are only identified with the date of the survey response.

69 Survey response, August 12, 2008.

70 Ibid., August 1, 2008.

71 Ibid., July 30, 2008.

72 Ibid., July 29, 2008.

73 Ibid., July 30, 2008.

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid., August 8, 2008.

76 Ibid., August 16, 2008.

77 Ibid., August 15, 2008.

78 Ibid., August 22, 2008.

79 Ibid., August 6, 2008.

80 Ibid., August 1, 2008.

81 Ibid., August 5, 2008.
82 Ibid., August 13, 2008.
83 Ibid., August 6, 2008.
84 Ibid., July 29, 2008.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid., July 30, 2008.
87 Ibid., August 2, 2008.
88 Ibid., August 5, 2008.
89 Ibid., August 5, 2008.
91 Ibid., July 31, 2008.
92 Ibid., August 15, 2008.
93 Ibid., August 5, 2008.
94 Ibid., August 8, 2008.
95 Ibid., July 31, 2008.
96 Dorothy Young, Houston, TX, survey response, July 29, 2008.
97 Hall response.
100 Rae Marek, Olmsted Twp., OH, survey response, July 30, 2008.
102 Melanie Elliott, Kingsville, MD, survey response, August 12, 2008.

Bonner response.

Ruthann Collins, Cuyahoga Falls, OH, survey response, August 1, 2008.


Marilyn Maher, Parkersburg, WV, survey response, August 1, 2008.

Jane Coleman, Sterling, VA, survey response, September 8, 2008.


Badertscher response.

Wagenhals response.


W.R. Bennington, South Charleston, WV, survey response, August 7, 2008.


Stough response.

Sandy Brawner, Lewisville, TX, survey response, July 30, 2008.

Janet Harms, Black Hawk, SD, survey response, July 31, 2008.


Kern response.


Christine Sale, Lanham, MD, survey response, August 24, 2008.

Mularo response.
125 Kathy Parker, Carrollton, TX, survey response, August 8, 2008.
126 Betty Tyler, Catonsville, MD, survey response, August 13, 2008.
128 Sumner response.
129 Denise Oldham, Indianapolis, IN, survey response, August 6, 2008.
130 Lybarger response.
131 Jane McPhee, Murrieta, CA, survey response, August 1, 2008.
132 Hummel response.
133 Tekampe response.
134 Pat Scully, Greenbelt, MD, survey response, August 4, 2008.
135 Haynes response.
136 Brawner response.
137 Harms response.
138 Ruper response.
139 Collier response.
140 Warnkey response.
142 Peterson response.
143 Poparad response.
145 Reeze Hanson, Ottawa, KS, survey response, August 7, 2008.

Johnson response.
CHAPTER VI

HOBBYIST OWNERS OF PROFESSIONAL-CALIBER EQUIPMENT

Based on the survey reports of the customers of professional machine quilting services, the popularity of machine quilting in the contemporary quilt movement and the technological developments in quilting equipment have helped initiate and promote the cottage industry of professional machine-quilting services. For this business to thrive, two forces had to converge: first, machine quilting had to be acknowledged within the quiltmaking community as a suitable quilt finishing process and, second, sharing the quiltmaking process with a professional quilter had to be accepted by the individual quiltmaker. As described in Chapter II, machine quilting is no longer eschewed by the global quilting community and it is now esteemed, honored, and celebrated. The willingness of the quiltmakers to share the ownership of their quilts with professional quilters, the second instigating force, is a practice with a long and widespread history. Within the contemporary quilt movement, a door has opened on an industry that is now flourishing on an international level.¹

For some quiltmakers, however, only one of the forces may be in effect. There are some quiltmakers who are unwilling to share the process of making their quilts and, ultimately, the product of their endeavors with another quilter. These quiltmakers prefer to perform all the steps of their own quilts personally and exclusively so as to retain
complete and whole ownership of the final product. They want to be able to say ‘it is all
mine!’

One of the experts of machine quilting in the contemporary quilt movement
supports this self-sufficient attitude. In the Forward to her fourth edition of the seminal
*Heirloom Machine Quilting*, Harriet Hargrave refuted the collaborative partnership
between customer and PMQ which she believes invalidates the sense of complete
ownership of the finished quilt. She stated:

[Learning to machine quilt] is much like childbirth – the labor is grueling, but the
reward at the end wipes all discomfort away in the joy you derive from the final
product. . . . . and it is all yours! More and more quilters are realizing that when
they send a quilt top to be quilted by someone else, the quilt they get back doesn’t
feel like it is really ‘theirs.’ They may feel rather detached from it.
Unfortunately, we live in a society that expects instant gratification, and we want
to try something once and be perfect at it. Machine quilting does not work that
way. It is a learned skill, much like riding a bike or playing the piano. You build
one skill on another, and time and practice allow your brain to process the new
skill. . . . Hang in there. The rewards are awesome!²

The hobbyist quilters so enjoy the process of machine quilting that they are
willing to invest significant amounts of money in professional-caliber equipment, the
same equipment used by the Professional Machine Quilters (PMQs) for income-
generating activities. For these quilters, the lure of the optimal machine-quilting
technology is undeniable. These hobbyists own professional-caliber machine-quilting
equipment but do not employ it for commercial endeavors. The hobbyists want to reap
the benefits of the ease, speed, and convenience offered by this specialty machine-
quilting equipment on their own quilts, for their own work. They believe the benefits of
the equipment warrant the expenditures in money, space, and time necessary to
successfully utilize this equipment. They invest money in the purchase of the equipment;
find a location for the sometimes large footprint required; and devote time to learn how to use it effectively. The hobbyists believe the returns to their quilting efforts outweigh the costs invested. This chapter explores the attitudes, motivations, and preferences of the hobbyist owners of professional-caliber quilting equipment.

Hobbyists Survey Results Overview

The survey results included 154 hobbyists who hail from thirty-seven states plus two from Canada, and one each from Australia, England, and France. At the time of the survey in 2008, 71 percent (109) of the hobbyists reported owning a long-arm style system for their quilting endeavors; 23 percent (35) owned mid-arms; 6 percent (10) owned short-arms; and 31 percent (47) owned domestic sewing machines (see figure 6.1). Twenty-six percent (40) had owned their equipment for less than one year; 58 percent (90) owned it for one to five years; and 16 percent (24) owned it over five years (see figure 6.2). During the course of ownership, 54 percent (83) reported quilting fewer than twenty quilts; 27 percent (41) quilted twenty to forty quilts; 9 percent (14) quilted forty to sixty quilts; and 10 percent (16) quilted over sixty quilts (see figure 6.3). On a monthly basis, 75 percent (116) quilt fewer than twenty quilts a month; 23 percent (35) quilt twenty to forty quilts; 1 percent (2) quilts forty to sixty quilts; and 1 percent (1) quilt over sixty quilts a month (see figure 6.4).

Motivations

Within the survey, the respondents were asked to describe their motivations for purchasing professional-caliber machine-quilting equipment. Presumably, the respondents want to machine quilt. The high cost of this equipment would seem to
Figure 6.1. Machine-Quilting Systems used by Hobbyists. This bar chart represents the quilting systems used by the respondent hobbyist owners of professional-caliber equipment.
Figure 6.2. Hobbyist Equipment Ownership Tenure. This pie chart illustrates the length of time that the responding hobbyists have owned their professional-caliber equipment.
Figure 6.3. Number of Quilts Quilted with Professional-Caliber Equipment. This pie chart illustrates the number of quilts quilted by Hobbyists on their professional-caliber equipment.
Figure 6.4. Hobbyist Monthly Quilt Production. This pie chart illustrates the monthly quilt production reported by the Hobbyists.
preclude anyone investing in it who is not interested in actually using it. With the responses to this survey question, the respondents were given the opportunity to specify, expand, and clarify their motivations. In their own words, they explained how and why they decided to invest in this specialty equipment. The responses fall into five thematic categories, including increased ease of using professional-caliber equipment; the express desire to construct the quilt in its entirety; financial aspects – whether the cost of the machine or the cost of outsourcing their quilting to a PMQ; the fun and enjoyment of machine quilting; and aspirations of establishing a professional quilting services business at a later date (see figure 6.5). The reasons are often multifaceted and overlapping and many hobbyists cite several decision factors which influenced the purchase of their professional-caliber equipment.

Ease and Convenience of Professional-Caliber Equipment

Fifty-seven percent (88) of the hobbyists responded that the ease and convenience of the professional-caliber equipment significantly influenced their purchase decision. Quilting on a domestic sewing machine has its own challenges, many of which are ameliorated on the specifically-optioned equipment. Caroline Benson⁴ of Ohio said:

I enjoy the quilting process but it was too strenuous, too difficult to do with a standard home sewing machine. I did many quilts that way but it was really hard work. I toyed with the idea of getting a large machine and when I inherited a little money I took the plunge.⁵

In her explanation of purchasing a long-arm, Marge Nickels of Tennessee compared machine quilting to drawing. She explained that she wanted “to move the pencil (sewing machine) and not the paper (quilt sandwich) whenquilting. Also because most of my pieces are bed size, usually queen or larger. That is too much bulk to
Figure 6.5. Hobbyist Purchase Motivations. This bar chart illustrates the motivations of the Hobbyist respondents in purchasing their professional-caliber equipment.
maneuver in the throat of a regular domestic sewing machine.” Sandy Borger of Ohio commented, “I have been quilting 30+ years and was getting tired of fighting with trying to quilt on my domestic machine. I now had the time, space, and money to purchase a professional caliber machine.” Linda Fuller Silver remarked, “I had been doing larger and larger quilts and it was impossible for me to continue to wrestle with them. I was crawling around on the floor basting, and avoiding projects above double bed size.” A physical limitation was also a motivator for Joan Sinclair of California who explained, “I could no longer do hand quilting, the arthritis in my fingers and wrist was getting worse. If I still wanted to quilt it was the only way I could do it.”

Jeffrey Lomicka of Massachusetts looked for a specific technological feature when selecting his long-arm. He also considered resale value. He described:

My wife attempted to hand quilt, and to machine quilt on a [domestic sewing machine], and found both methods were unreasonable for a large quilt. The cost of sending quilts out was so high, that we felt we would be able to get better results at less cost by getting our own machine. At the time, it was the smallest machine with a stitch regulator. We were fairly sure the machine would not lose too much value over the course of time we wanted to keep it.

Lydia Pochedly of Missouri compared quilting on all four levels of equipment and purchased a mid-arm system. She said:

This was a compromise between continuing to wrestle with the bulk under the harp of [a domestic sewing machine or a short-arm], and a full-blown longarm machine. The cost will be offset by the amount I won't be paying to someone else to quilt all my large quilts, which would have been likely if I hadn't bought some sort of machine and frame. I'd prefer to quilt my own tops, rather than having someone else do them. I don't object to others "quilting by check," but for me, if I don't do it all myself then I feel funny saying I made it. Also, I really enjoy the quilting part of the process, so I want to do it myself for that reason as well.

For several hobbyists, the convenience of the lower-end models was not enough and they subsequently upgraded their equipment even further. Melodye Marks of
Delaware commented, “I was no longer satisfied using my short arm . . . because of lack of it's control and I could only use invisible thread, I wanted to use metallics and other fancy threads to enhance my quilting.” Cheryl Behning of Iowa explained, “I did start with a table top frame and a domestic . . . sewing machine. It was ok, but very limiting. While at a quilt show trying to find something to make my set up work better the only good solution was a long arm.” Carol Paxton of Illinois also went from a short-arm to a long-arm. She explained:

I had been making many quilt tops. They were piling up and the cost was too high to have them quilted for me. Since they were very large tops I found out quickly that they were hard to quilt on the short arm machine. Soooo, took the plunge and purchased the long arm.

Linda Lang of British Columbia, Canada, also upgraded her equipment several times over the years. She remarked:

I wanted to take my "hobby" to the next level. I did a lot of commissioned quilts and wanted to quilt them myself. I also do a fair amount of charity quilting for other people. I went from a domestic machine; commercial stationary machine; short arm with wooden table to longarm. When I could not complete a queen size quilt on the short arm I bought my professional longarm.

Exclusive Completion

Thirty-three percent (51) of the hobbyists expressed the specific desire to construct the quilt in its entirety, completing it exclusively through their own efforts. The collaborative partnership with a PMQ holds no allure for these hobbyists. It is a matter of pride that they have constructed the entire quilt from start to finish, performing all the steps necessary to call the finished quilt their own. They do not want to participate in a joint effort that shares ownership of the final product, and they want to maintain complete creative control. Joyce Treizenberg of Michigan explained:
Getting my quilts finished in a reasonable time frame is one motivation. A lot of machine quilters are back logged. Also, I think of quilting as a real vehicle for self expression and creativity and I like having control of what goes into the quilt: materials, design, and technical execution throughout the whole process.16

Nancy Borgeson said, “I wanted the creative control over the finished product, wanted my quilts to be start-to-finish my own work.”17 For Lynda Newell of Oregon, control over the entire quiltmaking process was also a motivator. She remarked:

I am a prolific piecer and didn't want to have the expense or loss of control in having someone else quilt my tops. I wanted custom quilting and knew that would be too expensive to have quilted by someone else. I bought the top of the line because I knew I would only get to buy one machine one time and knew that if I didn't get the very best I would always feel there was something out there I didn't have and could have used. I enjoy the art of doing intricate custom quilting.18

Carol Erickson of Ohio commented, “I had many unfinished tops since they are less time intensive and I wanted my quilts to be completely "my own", and this includes the quilting. The price, size, ease of use, customer service and consumer feedback led me to purchase this machine and frame.”19 Debi Reese of Ohio said, “I'm spoiled!! Really, I am picky about my quilting and I wanted very complex intricate design that would cost a fortune to have someone else do for me. Besides, I want the entire quilt to be entirely my work.”20 Nancy Smith of Illinois related:

I wanted to finish my own quilts. I had been sending my tops to a professional long-arm quilter, and she did a fine job, but I felt limited by what she could quilt and the pricing. I thought I would be able to choose more diverse patterns and spend as much time on my quilt as I wanted and therefore get a better product when done.21

Diana Spence of Iowa commented, “When I start a quilt, I want to finish it. I didn't like waiting two years to get a quilt back. Also, no one knows how I see the quilting in my own mind. I want to do it my way.”22 Rebecca Ball of Missouri had several
disappointments with the quality of workmanship from PMQs and decided to take control of her own quilts. She said:

At the time, we did not have local quilters that could do the kind of custom work I wanted. I had tried many, and never seemed to have the results I wanted. I spend too much time and money creating my quilts to have them quilted ‘professionally’ and not be happy with the results. I did NOT expect it to take me as long as it has to become proficient with the large machine. I learned that what I wanted on my quilts was created with a lot of additional tools, and have gradually added those.23

Financial Motivations

For many hobbyists, 20 percent (31) of the respondents, the financial aspects – whether the cost of the machine or the cost of outsourcing their quilting to a PMQ – were the motivation for purchasing professional-caliber equipment. Carolyn Bradshaw of Texas said, “I had stacks of unquilted tops, and didn’t have time to quilt them myself. The cost of sending them to a professional longarmer was getting so expensive I could only budget to have 2-3 done per year.”24 Phyllis Crothers of Oregon said, “I had been paying to have my tops quilted, having pieced 12 bed quilt tops in one year, so felt, and hubby agreed, that we should buy a machine and frame so I could do my own.”25 Meg Marshall of Washington weighed the investment of the machine against the cost of having her quilts professionally quilted. She remarked:

[I] hated quilting on the domestic sewing machine. [I] am a type A person and after investigating the mid-arm and long-arm machines for 5 years, decided I would not be happy with one of the lesser machines. I also got to the point where I felt that continuing to pay another person to LA [long-arm] my quilts was not beneficial to me. I do several quilts and year and to have them LA'ed was becoming very expensive - better to put the money into my own machine.26

Sammi Boyd of Montana found the cost of a used machine affordable. She said, “I became enamored with quilting, wanted to quilt the tops myself, but it was
prohibitively expensive to rent machines while learning. Also, in a world of machines that regularly cost over $10,000, this used machine was a bargain.27

A tragedy gave Pamela Sperling of Ohio the financial means to invest in equipment and retirement gave her the time to perfect her skills. She explained:

I love making the quilts. I am not good at hand quilting so I had to keep sending the quilt tops out to be quilted. It was getting expensive for me. I made a few quilts that were small and did them on my domestic machine but when I tried a bed size quilt I found it unwieldy. I was enchanted with the long arms from the first time I saw one. Then when I found out that they had come out with a stitch regulator I really began to covet one. Cost was the big constraint. However, my mother died three years ago and my father a year ago. They left me some money. I was laid off a year and a half ago and decided to just retire at that point. I decided to use part of the money my parents left me to buy the Milli. I have named her "JJ" after my parents, Jack and Joan. Since I am retired having JJ has kept me busy making quilts. I can also afford to make quilts as gifts now. I probably would not have bought JJ a year ago if I hadn't retired.28

Enjoyment of Machine Quilting

Approximately 18 percent (27) of the hobbyists mentioned the fun and enjoyment of machine quilting as part of their motivation for purchasing the equipment. For these hobbyists, machine quilting is an adventure and a challenge. Vicki Welsh of Virginia said, “I love all of the steps in quilting, especially the machine quilting but doing traditional machine quilting on a DSM caused lots of back problems.”29 Elizabeth Abel of Pennsylvania remarked, “It looked like fun, I knew I would not get my tops hand quilted as I am very slow at that. Also, the price for my machine fit my budget.”30 Kathy Knapp of Oregon commented:

I love the whole process of quilt making. I wanted to be able to quilt what I wanted on my quilts and when I started, most of what was available was the Pantographs, which in my opinion, I thought was quite boring. Since then...the free hand quilting has exploded and I love what I see and am trying to learn from others to increase my talents.31
For Mary Zeitz of Ohio, the motivations were multi-faceted. She said:

I wanted to make large quilts and was unwilling to try and quilt them on a domestic machine. I want my quilts to be completely done by myself, from start to finish and didn't want to hire someone else to quilt them. And, I thought it would be a lot of fun to use.32

Business Aspirations

A small group of these hobbyists, 15 percent (23), have aspirations of establishing a professional quilting services business at some later date and, in preparation, have purchased professional-caliber equipment in order to perfect their skills. Some of the hobbyists are looking forward to retirement from other professions. Rachel Pearlstein of Massachusetts related, “I plan to get good enough so that when I retire I can make additional income. Not there yet.”33 Rita Leonard of Massachusetts remarked, “I hope to quilt professionally after retirement from my full time job. I didn't want to get something smaller and then need to upgrade later.”34 Jane Baxter in St Jean de Sauves, France, said, “I wanted to be doing the whole quilt myself rather than handing it over to somebody else for the quilting! In the long term I hope to expand into quilting for friends, and then perhaps as a business. But time will tell - I will wait and see how things go!”35 Peggy Otto of Illinois commented, “I was trying to quilt using my regular sewing machine and I didn't like the results. I hope to do quilting for retirement income in a few years.”36

While some hobbyists aspire to become professional, others who originally shared that dream have decided against it. One hobbyist discovered that customer service was a challenging aspect to providing professional machine-quilting services. She explained:

[I bought the equipment] to quilt for a living, and quit nursing. But after doing that for a few months I found people were way too demanding and were, for the
most part, bringing me inferior quilt tops. I very much enjoy just doing it for myself and a few friends. I also like to teach others how to use the machine if they are interested in buying one of their own. I don't rent it out or anything like that. I'm the only one that really quilts on it.\textsuperscript{37}

Purchasing professional-caliber equipment is not a decision made lightly. The hobbyists did so with a myriad of motivations and aspirations. These quilters seem to enjoy and appreciate the ease and facility provided by professional-caliber equipment in their quilting endeavors. They are proud of their individual accomplishment in producing a quilt from start to finish on their own, sharing the pride of workmanship with no one. Many hobbyists consider the financial outlay a wise investment that will pay for itself over time. Some hobbyists hope to one day join the cottage industry of the PMQs. The next section addresses the question as to how this investment has impacted the hobbyists’ quiltmaking production.

Production Impact

In the survey, the hobbyist respondents were asked if owning the equipment had impacted their quilt production. The majority, 69 percent (106), answered in the affirmative that their production had increased; 26 percent (40) identified no change in production; and 5 percent (8) responded that their production had decreased as a result of owning professional-caliber equipment. Like the customers of the PMQs, increased productivity is not simply defined as increased quantity of quilt tops, but it is also expressed in terms of skill sets and fully completed quilts, the ultimate goal of all quiltmakers.

Quilt top production has increased for many respondents. Joan May of Illinois said, “I am making more as the entire process is easier and quicker now.”\textsuperscript{38} Teresa
Sladvonik of Texas related, “Increased the number of tops I make tenfold. I do not quilt by hand, and quilting a top on my domestic sewing machine is very tedious, time consuming and physically demanding.”

Rita Leonard of Massachusetts said, “I have produced more tops in the past two years than I had in the previous 20.” K. Elvin of Illinois remarked, “I have made many more tops because I know that they will get finished. Before I had a stack of tops waiting to be quilted and felt guilty about adding to the stack.”

Donna Merrill of Colorado commented, “I have actually added more tops to quilt since I got the machine, I have been making tops to ‘practice’ on before I do the ‘real ones,’ the ones I had made before buying the machine.”

Mary Shea of Virginia is working hard to keep her quilting equipment busy. She said, “I find I run out of quilts quick. I did 5 in a three day period. I find I am sewing like a mad woman to have something to quilt!”

Another form of improved production is in the increased quality of the hobbyists’ personal workmanship. Linda Fuller Silver of Virginia commented, “I am able to turn out top notch quilts with no worries about how they will be finished or when, can control the whole artistic process and timing. [I] am also able to quilt enormous quilts.”

Julie McClannan of Nebraska said, “I am quilting much more and the quality of my quilting has definitely improved.”

Meg Marshall of Washington remarked:

I am becoming more critical of the work. I now want to incorporate more complex designs - before it had became too expensive to have done what I truly wanted. Now I just need to become good enough to do all the things I want to do. It is an intense activity to learn and learn well. It is a continuing process. I have also gained a much higher respect to those who are truly talented and very creative in the field.

Rosemary Rhine of Washington reported:
I have made large quilts without a longarm machine and therefore know how wonderful such a machine is. Although some quilt freehand on a domestic machine (and [her model] makes it easy), there is no comparison to the ease of the longarm in handling bulk, in being able to work with ease, not worrying about the underside, etc. Having the [equipment] has helped me make more professional looking quilt tops (the last one had an entire poem on the front!)  

For some hobbyists, owning professional-caliber equipment had led to them start quiltmaking altogether. Ellie Monroe of Ohio related:

I did not start quilting until my sister got this machine. I was always going to quilt ‘someday,’ but I have never enjoyed hand sewing and did not see myself hand quilting. So none of my quilt tops would have been made without the availability of this machine.  

Kelly Sattler of Michigan said, “I hadn't quilted until I started to consider doing this professionally. So, initially, it caused my quilt top production. Then I offered to quilt some for charities and my mom got involved with quilting. So, my top production has recently diminished to none per year.”  

Jeffrey Lomicka of Massachusetts commented, “I didn't make quilt tops before this machine arrived, and wasn't interested in quilts. Now I try to make at least one top a year.”  

For some hobbyists the increased production is defined by successfully completing quilts. Lynda Newell of Oregon related, “Before purchasing the machine I had over 70 quilt tops. Since I am still a prolific piecer, I still have over 70 quilt tops but I also have completed 40 - 60 quilts!”  

Anne Henter of Iowa reported, “Greatly increased the finishing of quilts. Also made it easier to give quilts as gifts and not have to wait in line for tops to be quilted.”  

Kathleen Panzera of Maryland said that her worries are alleviated, “I'm much happier finishing tops knowing that I don't have to dread the process of using a regular sewing machine. I know that the top will get quilted in a timely manner as opposed to sitting in a stack somewhere.”  

Jeanne Ayers of New York
remarked, “I can accomplish more because I can finish my own tops faster and more to
my satisfaction.” Lydia Pochedly of Missouri commented:

   It really hasn't impacted my quilt TOP production -- I had a backlog of tops
   needing quilted, and I still do. Most of what I've quilted so far has been charity
   quilts, although I have done a few of my own tops. However, I do finish more
   things, sooner, than I did before I had the [mid-arm].

   The learning curve and involvement in other endeavors may have prevented some
hobbyists from seeing an increased production, and their production may have decreased.
Nancy Arsenault of Arizona said, “I . . . expect it to impact my finished quilt production
once I get the hang of it. Although I have been quilting on a domestic machine for many
years, there is a learning curve in becoming proficient on the professional equipment.”
Donna Hinshaw of California related, “I haven't made more tops as a result. If anything,

   it has slowed down the production, since I will be quilting EXISTING quilt tops made
over the past 5 years which were too big for me to quilt on my domestic sewing

   machine.” Gayle Jackson of California reported:

   I work full time, thus I don't get to spend as much time as I would like on quilting.
   I love to look at the machine and always have something, even a practice fabric,
   on the machine so I can run my hands over the quilting. So satisfying to know I
   did it myself. Owning this machine has actually prompted me to piece tops.

Rachel Pearlstein of Massachusetts said, “Actually, it has slowed down because I want to
play in [with the] LA [long-arm] - practice, practice, practice!” Marge Nickels of

   Tennessee commented:

   It has probably slowed it down some. The last year that my friend quilted for me,
she did 14 quilt tops. Now, I may do six or seven a year. That is still quite a bit, I
suppose. But I have had to take the time to practice with my machine, because I
want to be able to do heirloom or custom level quilting on my pieces.
Ownership of professional-caliber equipment has been a boon to many of the hobbyists in terms of quilt production, skills acquired, and finished quilts. By having this equipment, their participation in the contemporary quilt movement has expanded and increased. Not only do they personally enjoy machine quilting, their use of specialized equipment increases the exposure to and popularity of machine quilting as an acceptable and beautiful means to finishing a quilt. The overall quiltmaking community’s attitude toward machine quilting has been and will continue to be positively impacted by the work of these hobbyists. The next section reports on the changes experienced and the changes anticipated by these hobbyist quilters.

Changes Seen and Foreseen

The survey asked the hobbyists to describe changes they had experienced in their attitude towards machine quilting and changes they anticipated in the industry, equipment, and technology. Their participation in the contemporary quilt movement with specialized machine-quilting experience is direct evidence of the appreciation of machine quilting.

Attitude Changes

As with the customers of the PMQs, the hobbyists had also experienced a change in attitude toward machine quilting. The majority of hobbyists responding, 74 percent (114), noted that their attitude towards machine quilting had changed positively since they had first become a quiltermaker, a result which correlates with the PMQ customers. Additionally, 12 percent (18) of the hobbyists reported that they have always had positive perception towards machine quilting for a total of an 86 percent (132) positive attitude
toward machine quilting. This, again, may be no surprise because this is a respondent group of quilters who have purchased professional-caliber machine-quilting equipment and, therefore, presumably predisposed to a positive attitude toward it.

Several long-term participants in the contemporary quilt movement described how their attitudes regarding machine quilting have altered. Belinda Mace of Wisconsin reported:

Total 180! My children still laugh that I am machine quilting. We used to turn our noses up at machine quilting. It wasn't until I saw heirloom machine quilting that I got interested. I have no use for pantograph quilting still. I bought Harriet Hargrave's first machine quilting book in the 1980s but it was all done on domestic machines and that is what I have done. But my body is so grateful not to be wrestling the quilts under the little machine now.61

Nancy Borgeson of Michigan went through a quilting progression experienced by many veteran quiltmakers. She remarked:

At first (30+ years ago), I preferred hand quilting. It was too slow. Machine quilting on domestic machine followed, but was too bulky for me to handle. Took tops to longarmers but wanted creative control. Finally bought my own machine when I had the room for it.62

Leslie Thornton of Florida, even though a relative recent participant in the quilt movement, initially began as a hand-quilter. She explained:

When I began quilting 4 years ago, my desire was to do it all the old fashioned way - hand quilting. It took me a year to hand quilt my first quilt. I realized at my age, I would hardly get many completed if I stayed with that thought. I took a sit-down domestic machine class at the local quilt shop to learn how to quilt on my sit down sewing machine. That proved to be, FOR ME, useless. Ultimately I knew I had to move right on forward and bought the long arm. I've never had a regret!!!63

While a physical impairment may have been the impetus to the change of heart, Nancy Arseneault of Arizona was also moved by the beauty of exquisite machine work. She said,
Of course, dramatically. Thirty years ago most people were purists. Everything should be done by hand. Now, I am not able to quilt by hand anymore so I do everything on the machine. Since Caryl Bryer Fallert’s win at Paducah several years back, I have learned to enjoy the artistry of machine quilting as an entirely different medium than hand quilting.\textsuperscript{64}

An early experimenter in machine work, Marie Crane of Pennsylvania related:

It definitely has changed over the years. My first quilt was done in the late 60's, an original. When I look at it now I cringe - poly-cotton fabric, appliqué done with a very unprofessional looking zig-zag stitch and stitch in the ditch to hold it all together and bound with gathers at the rounded corners. And this took a prize at the County Fair???. It's a good reminder that we have come so far in our ideas of what quilting can really be.\textsuperscript{65}

The positive change in attitude towards machine quilting in the overall quilting community is evidenced by the changes experienced by the hobbyists. Many of the hobbyists started their quilting endeavors doing handwork, thinking that it was the authentic, pure process for producing quilts. Whether it was the speed, the ease, or the beauty of machine quilting, the majority of these quilters became convinced that machine quilting was not a sub-standard alternative to hand-quilting. Machine quilting is not only accepted and appreciated; it is actually practiced, promoted, and celebrated by the hobbyists.

Industry Changes

The changes anticipated by the hobbyists run the gamut from those related to technology and equipment to cost and attitudes. Many hobbyists expect, in the future, that more quilters will follow their lead and invest in specialized quilting equipment. They anticipate that manufacturers will produce more models at price-points that are attractive to more personal users. They expect costs to come down and that more quilters will be interested in owning their own equipment. More machines may mean more
finished quilts, as Gayle Jackson of California enthused, “More Longarms will be in
homes as time goes by. Isn't it wonderful that tops are actually getting quilted and not
left in closets, drawers, and grocery bags?”66

As exciting as that may be for the passionate quilters, it might, in turn, have a
negative impact on the PMQs. As more quiltmakers finish their own quilts, the PMQs
may see a drop in their income. Bonnie Fish of British Columbia, Canada, commented:

I think there will be less professional quilters required as the machines become
more directed to the personal quilter. Even the domestic machines now have
stitch regulators and more space to make it easier to do your own quilting at
home. This will impact the longarm industry negatively.67

Technology and equipment will undoubtedly continue to expand and evolve,
improving all aspects of the process. Hobbyists suggested better ergonomics, cone-fed
bobbins, even no bobbins, and better loading systems. Nicole Worthington of New
Jersey said, “I expect the features on the long-arms to continue to develop and for the
quilters to keep coming up with innovative ways to dazzle us. It seems as though there
are new tools popping up every day.”68 Computerization and stitch-regulation will
become the more available and utilized. Libby Zakowicz of Connecticut said:

I would think machines will become more automated, and more often connected
to computers, either built-in or by wireless connection. Information will become
increasingly easier to find, and there will be more of it. Tasks such as bobbin
winding and threading will be automatic and machines will sense the needed
tension for the material. I also think there will be additional changes to long arm
machines, making them more compact and therefore possible to more people.69

Diana Spence of Iowa compared the advancements in computerized quilting to the
overall acceptance of the machine quilting. She explained:

I think more tops will be quilted with the aid of a computer. It's just the natural
progression. People used to say a machine quilted quilt was bad. Now it is the
norm and soon it will be the norm for the tops to be computer aided quilted. My
Grandmother quilted by hand and I know she would have loved to have her top quilted by computer aided machine. It's just keeping up with the times.  

Not all the respondents were enamored with computerization. Many were concerned that the precision of a machine-controlled work is unfairly compared to hand-guided work. Kay Depriest of Missouri spoke for many quilters who are trepidatious about machine-guided quilting. She said:

> From what I see, computerized quilting is really coming into its own. As a computer person, the application intrigues me. HOWEVER, I don't believe it is fair in competition for a purely hand-guided quilt patterns to have to compete with a computer-generated pattern. That IS the wave of the future, I believe.

Many of the hobbyists hope to encourage and promote quiltmaking to new and younger quilters to infuse and invigorate the industry. The hobbyists are avidly and enthusiastically involved in the contemporary quilting movement, and would like to see quiltmaking promoted more widely with more shows and exhibits in order to broaden the general public’s appreciation about the artistic achievements of quilters. Jennifer Bunnell of Florida remarked, “I just wish that more of the general public understood quilting as something modern, exciting, and genuinely artistic. Most non-quilters picture boring scrap quilts constructed by grey-haired old ladies sitting around a frame at the church.”

Becky Nyberg of Indiana concurs. She said:

> I do not think that the non-quilting world truly understands the time, effort and value of quilts, especially as an art form. I have quilts displayed throughout the hospital where I work full-time. I always have staff, patients and families commenting on my work. Their general perception of quilting is the scrap quilts their grandmother made.

The hobbyists, for the most part, are excited and look forward to what the future will bring. Pat Hierl of Montana predicted, “I think quilters are a fabulous bunch of very talented people. If they need something, they will invent it.” Carol Srajer of Ohio said,
“The sky is the limit - new computers, new software, easier ways to design and transfer that design to the actual quilt - every year there is something new - it is an exciting time - lot's to learn and new ways of doing everything.”

The hobbyist owners of professional-caliber equipment are wholehearted participants in the contemporary quilt movement and are also avid promoters of machine quilting. They have invested significant amounts of money and time into purchasing and becoming adept on their specialized equipment. This investment was motivated by the convenience features of the equipment, the desire to complete the quilt completely on their own accord, financial reasons, an explicit love of machine quilting, and potential revenue-generation. They love to machine quilt, and this equipment makes it easier. They are proud of the quilts that they make and do not want to share that pride with another quilter. These hobbyists want to be able to say that they did it all themselves. In this, they are unwilling to participate in the second required impetus for the flourishing PMQ industry. They understand and embrace all the steps required to make a complete and finished quilt, and their sense of self is bolstered in this endeavor. The financial investment is worth the ability to claim the finished quilt in its entirety. Some dream of one day earning an income as a PMQ but, for now, they enjoy quilting for themselves, honing and perfecting their skills.

Hobbyist owners of professional-caliber equipment are full participants in the contemporary quilt movement. Owning this equipment has increased their productivity in terms of the quantity of quilt tops and improved their quiltmaking skills. The hobbyists have become more active and more enthusiastic quilters. With alacrity, they achieve the ultimate goal of all quilters – the finished quilt.
Notes

1 See Chapter IV. The Professional Machine Quilters survey respondents included six from Canada, five from Australia, one from New Zealand, and one from France.

2 Harriet Hargrave, Heirloom Machine Quilting: A Comprehensive Guide to Hand-Quilted Effects Using Your Sewing Machine, 4th ed., (Lafayette, CA: C & T Publishing, 2004), 8. In this same text, Hargrave comments against the use of specialized machine quilting equipment in support of using a domestic sewing machine. She said: I can’t help but add a word about longarm machines and the systems that attempt to turn a home machine into a longarm setup. I am offended that these companies believe they invented machine quilting. I am concerned that beginning machine quilters are being given the impression that they can’t quilt a large quilt without a longarm machine, or without investing heavily in the various gimmicks coming on the market. Consumers are being told that machine quilting will wear out their home-sewing machine. I’m here to refute all that nonsense. . . .

3 The number in the parentheses is the numerical value of survey responses of hobbyist users of professional-caliber equipment used to derive the percentage cited. Due to rounding in the calculations, the percentages may not total 100 percent.

4 See Appendix A for the University of Akron IRB Notice of Approval. All names are cited in this thesis with the express permission of the individual as granted in the permission section of the online survey. See Appendix B.

7 Sandy Borger, Fairfield, OH, survey response, August 11, 2008.
8 Linda Fuller Silver, Newport News, VA, survey response, August 1, 2008.
12 Melodye Marks, Newark, DE, survey response, August 2, 2008.
13 Cheryl Behning, Donahue, IA, survey response, August 2, 2008.
14 Carol Paxton, Naperville, IL, survey response, August 3, 2008.
15 Linda Lang, Rosedale, BC, Canada, survey response, August 1, 2008.
19 Carol Erickson, Akron, OH, survey response, July 30, 2008. Erickson currently resides in Lexington, KY.
21 Nancy Smith, Lake Forest, IL, survey response, July 30, 2008.
22 Diana Spence, La Porte City, IA, survey response, August 1, 2008.
23 Rebecca Ball, Blue Springs, MO, survey response, August 4, 2008.
24 Carolyn Bradshaw, Victoria, TX, survey response, August 6, 2008.
31 Kathy Knapp, Glide, OR, survey response, August 1, 2008.
33 Rachel Pearlstein, Newbury, MA, survey response, August 1, 2008.
193
Jean Baxter, St Jean de Sauves, France, survey response, August 1, 2008.


For privacy purposes, the name of this respondent will be withheld. Survey response, July 30, 2008.

Joan May, Peoria, IL, survey response, August 3, 2008.


Leonard response.

K. Elvin, Batavia, IL, survey response, August 9, 2008.


Linda Fuller Silver, Newport News, VA, survey response, August 1, 2008.

Julie McClannan, Bellevue, NE, survey response, August 1, 2008.

Marshall response.


Kelly Sattler, DeWitt, MI, survey response, August 11, 2008.

Lomicka response.

Newell response.

Anne Henter, Clive, IA, survey response, August 1, 2008.


Pochedly response.
59 Pearlstein response.
61 Belinda Mace, Hayward, WI, survey response, July 29, 2008.
64 Arseneault response.
65 Marie Crane, Portersville, PA, survey response, July 30, 2008.
66 Jackson response.
69 Libby Zakowicz, Manchester, CT, survey response, July 31, 2008.
70 Spence response.
73 Becky Nyberg, Bloomington, IN, survey response, July 31, 2008.
74 Pat Hierl, Whitefish, MT, survey response, August 19, 2008.
75 Carol Srajer, Mantua, OH, survey response, August 1, 2008.
CHAPTER VII
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Professional Machine Quilters (PMQs) of the twenty-first century did not invent the cottage industry of providing quilting services to quiltmakers. Historically, the intricate and challenging quilting process was relegated to a professional to perform. Quiltmakers have long known, as pointed out by Carrie Hall and Rose Kretsinger in 1935, that the quilting stitches will either make or mar the beauty of the finished quilt.¹ The quilting process requires, in the words of Ruth Finley in 1929, “technique” and “feeling,” and is a very specialized task that requires both needlework and artistic design skills.² Whether the relegation of this step to others is motivated by lack of skill, time, comfort, or affinity, professional quilting services have been available for most of quiltmaking history. In the contemporary quilt movement, Professional Machine Quilters have melded the new technologies in machine-quilting equipment with their entrepreneurship to make these services new and exciting and in so doing, have influenced the quiltmaking community to make even more and more beautiful quilts.

From the introduction of the sewing machine in the mid-nineteenth century, machine quilting has been practiced with vacillating levels of popularity. When first manufactured, sewing machines were extremely expensive relative to a family’s average annual income and, thus, owning a sewing machine was a status symbol. Many
quiltmakers used visible quilting on their quilts to announce and display their access to a sewing machine. Colonial Revivalism impacted the early twentieth-century quilt revival and quiltmakers desired to emulate their colonial ancestors in their quilt construction processes. Sewing machine use became eschewed in favor of handwork on quilts. During the quilt revival of the early twentieth century, hand-quilting was preferred but often this hand-quilting was performed by a paid professional.

As the late twentieth-century quilt revival gained momentum, the Colonial Revival impact was again influential and quiltmakers again considered hand-quilting to be more authentic, historic, pure, and acceptable for finishing quilts. In the 1970s, however, several authors and quilt artists encouraged creativity and experimentation with the sewing machine for quilting endeavors. By this time, the sewing machine was ubiquitous and many quiltmakers, comfortable and expert in machine use, accepted the challenge of perfecting quilting with a sewing machine. As the late-twentieth-century quilt revival became a full-blown quiltmaking movement, machine quilting slowly and inexorably was accepted by the global quiltmaking community as an option for beautifully finishing a quilt.

Even though machine quilting was gaining a following, there was another viewpoint that had to be assuaged before the professional machine-quilting industry could flourish. The social-cultural attitudes of Colonial Revivalism, craft-renewal, and back-to-nature that co-existed with the quilt revival fostered an attitude that the best way to do anything was independently. Collaboration between quilter and professional quilter had long been an accepted and, even, an expected practice in quiltmaking. This
practice, however, was abandoned in favor of an attitude of exclusive ownership achieved through self-sufficiency, self-production, and self-expression. This attitude initially precluded collaboration with outside quilting services. Without the amelioration of this proscriptive attitude, the services of contemporary PMQs and their cottage industry would never have developed to the current levels. For this collaboration to thrive in a mutually beneficial manner, the overall quiltmaking community granted permission for the collaboration while simultaneously acknowledging that shared ownership in the final quilt could be a source of personal pride and identity for both the quiltmaker and the PMQ. With this acknowledgement, customers flocked to PMQs for help in achieving the ultimate goal, a finished quilt.

A significant technological factor in the professional machine-quilting industry was developing, too, in the 1980s. New innovations in the field of sewing machines resulted in the introduction of specialized machine-quilting equipment. Elongated, industrial sewing-machine heads were mounted onto a table-and-frame system that facilitated machine quilting. Manufacturers offered machine quilters options previously unimagined in terms of machine-quilting equipment. As this niche in the sewing-machine industry grew, notions, tools, supplies, and even textile materials, in the forms of thread and wide-milled fabrics, were developed to augment this new approach to machine quilting. The straight-line, humble beginnings of machine quilting have evolved into fabulous feathers and sparkling swirls with effects unachievable through any other process.
With the innovative machine systems, accouterments, and notions to support the process, more and more entrepreneurial quilters invested in this equipment and offered their quilting services to other quiltmakers, putting a new spin on the age-old cottage industry of professional quilting services. Using the latest in machine-quilting technology and the finest textile products available, PMQs presented a valued service to quiltmakers who did not have the time, skill, or inclination to complete their quilts. They initiated a personal business to share that love and beauty, to provide a personal income, and to facilitate for their customers a collaboration of completion.

The availability of the quilting services that the professionals provide has allowed quiltmakers the freedom to participate in those aspects of the hobby that they enjoy or in which they excel, namely the design and construction of the quilt tops, while using experts to provide the completion services of quilting the quilt. This freedom is obtained from the collaborative efforts of quiltmaker and professional quilter. Ownership of the finished piece is shared and enjoyed by both collaborators. The collaborative partnership of work and productivity results in a finished quilt that is the ultimate goal of the quiltmaker. The finished product is a source of pride and personal identity, imbued with meaning and significance to the quiltmakers. The completion of their efforts as a consequence of the partnership with PMQs results in an increased satisfaction with the time and money invested in their hobby. This, in turn, increases the quiltmakers’ willingness and desire to remain active in the hobby. From this willingness often comes increased productivity of the individual quiltmakers which, in turn, leads to continual renewal and revitalization of the contemporary quilt movement.
With the acceptance of machine quilting, the acknowledgement of shared ownership, and the availability of these services, the quilters have become more productive, making more quilts, larger quilts, and more difficult quilts knowing that there are PMQs who can easily and beautifully quilt all their quilts. Most important is the productivity of completion. With the help of a PMQ, a quilter fulfills the goal of the finished quilt which is the ultimate motivation for beginning each and every quilt. It is only a finished quilt that can be used and thus instilled with the symbolic meaning and sense of identity intended by the quilter. The finished quilt is a fulfillment of the plans and dreams of all quilters and is the source for the pride of accomplishment, personal identity, and self-expression, all of which can only come to fruition in the completion of quilt tops. Finished quilts are the culmination of the approval of new quilting processes, innovative technology, and acceptance of a collaborative partnership between quilter and professional quilter.

There are, however, quilters who do not relish this collaborative energy. Not all quilters desire to share their work; some want to be able to say that they made a quilt entirely on their own, to avoid sharing the resultant personal pride or meaning of the quilt with any partner. They are hobbyists, quilters who quilt for themselves on professional-caliber equipment. These hobbyists also enjoy the beauty and challenges of machine quilting, so much so, in fact, that they are willing to invest substantial amounts of time and money in the newest machine-quilting technology. They wholly participate in the positive, contemporary attitudes towards machine quilting and with the technology
that facilitates it, and recognize that ownership of this equipment has made them more productive quiltmakers.

The quilting industry has exploded in the past thirty years, growing by more than four times from 1994 to 2006. Machine quilting has been a major influence in the exponential growth of this industry. All the participants in this research project, members of the contemporary quilt movement – the PMQs, their customers, and the hobbyists – are productive on creative, commercial, and educational levels within the quilt movement. They play a major role in the support, promotion, and perpetuation of the art of quiltmaking. By purchasing equipment, notions, supplies, and textiles with which they can express their passion in quiltmaking, quiltmakers are contributing to the on-going financial strength of the industry. Their participation supports designers and instructors who continue to develop new patterns and processes to challenge and thrill the quiltmakers who flock to classes, shows, exhibits, and festivals to see the latest styles and ideas in quiltmaking and to share in the satisfaction of completion. The current acceptance of machine quilting and the availability of excellent professional machine-quilting services facilitate the ultimate goal, the finished quilt, and thereby facilitate the satisfaction and pride of the quiltmaker. Consequently, the satisfied quiltmaker begins again to make another quilt, contributing again to an ever-growing multi-billion dollar industry.

Undoubtedly, the twenty-first century will also be a time for new traditions in quiltmaking, spawning new iterations of long-time practices modified by new technologies and techniques. Permission for collaboration has been granted; it is unlikely
that the global quiltmaking community will subsequently rescind it. Technology will march on with alterations and improvements possibly yet unimagined. While conflicts about the process of machine quilting and the ownership of the final product have been resolved for the most part, there are controversies that remain unresolved and controversies just beginning to foment. Attribution in judging and awarding prizes in quilt shows is a challenge as yet unresolved. Evaluating computer-guided quilting in the same categories as hand-guided is an emerging concern.

Change is inevitable, even desired, for no artform can stagnate. Otherwise, participants will seek other avenues of stimulation and self-expression. As Penny McMorris and Michael Kile related in their 1986 book, *The Art Quilt*:

> The quilt, as a creative form of expression, is constantly being re-evaluated by its creators. It is important to remember that, most often, it is the commentators on a creative art form, not the creators of it, who question experimentation and are frightened by it. The creators know that all quiltmakers, for example, are constantly experimenting, some within the defined tenets of the art, some outside. It is through change that anything of merit evolves. . . . But without experimentation and change, without creative pioneers who are willing to test the limits of any art form, that art form will surely die, if from nothing more than the sheer weight of its own tedium.³

Machine quilting is an excellent example of experimentation and change within the artform of quiltmaking. The limits of the art have been explored with a resultant appreciation of machine quilting that is now pervasive. In 1989 when Caryl Bryer Fallert received the Best of Show ribbon at the American Quilter’s Society’s annual quilt show in Paducah, Kentucky, for her *Corona II: The Solar Eclipse*, it was a momentous occasion for aficionados of machine quilting but significant for the controversies that ensued. Twenty years later, the American Quilter’s Society has expanded to four venues,
adding Knoxville, Tennessee; Des Moines, Iowa; and Lancaster, Pennsylvania sites to the venerable Paducah, Kentucky, show. At each venue, there are three primary judged categories based on quilt size – bed quilts, large wall, and small wall quilts. Within each of the size categories are three sub-categories one for hand quilting, one for machine quilting on a home sewing machine, and a third for longarm/midarm machine quilting. At the 2010 Paducah show, once again, a machine-quilted quilt received the Janome Best of Show ribbon. Sue McCarty of Roy, Utah, was honored for her whole-cloth masterpiece, *Tribute to Tolkien*. This amazing quilt was created using a long-arm machine and features a medieval coronation and marriage scene with royal figures, horsemen, and ornate architectural details all rendered in thread and oil colors on black cotton sateen. McCarty also received the Pfaff Master Award for Machine Artistry and Viewer’s Choice Award on this same piece at the 2009 International Quilt Festival in Houston. Machine quilting is now a celebrated, appreciated, and respected artform.

This thesis represents the first in-depth study of the community of Professional Machine Quilters, and it outlines the place in and impact on the larger contemporary quiltmaking community of this sub-community. Owners of this specialty equipment have helped the quilting industry in financial ways by investing in new technologies to perform the quilting. Professional Machine Quilters have helped the industry by providing essential completion services for their customers. The customer quilters have helped the industry by purchasing fabric and notions, classes and patterns, and then repeating the process to begin another quilt. From origins of denunciation to this
significant impact on the overall quilting industry, machine quilting is one of the most vital components of the contemporary quilt movement.
Notes


BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Articles and Books


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“Quilting in America™ 2006.”

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Internet Sites


To Be Quilting Inc. “About Us; To Be Quilting Inc.” www.to bequilting.com/about/about.htm (accessed May 6, 2010).

Organizations


Events


Home Machine Quilting Show in Salt Lake City, UT. www.hmqs.org (accessed May 9, 2010).


Secondary Works

Articles and Books


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

IRB NOTICE OF APPROVAL

The University of Akron

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

Date: April 30, 2008

To: Margaret A. Bingham
   1610 Orchard Drive
   Akron, Ohio 44333

From: Sharon McWhorter, IRB Administrator

Re: IRB Number 2008D0419
   "Influence of Professional Long-Arm machine Quilting on the Late-Twentieth Century Quilt Revival"

Thank you for submitting your IRB Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects for the referenced project. Your application was approved on April 29, 2008. Your protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and matches the following federal category for exemption:

☐ Exemption 1 - Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices.

☐ Exemption 2 - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior.

☐ Exemption 3 - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior not exempt under category 2, but subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office.

☐ Exemption 4 - Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens.

☐ Exemption 5 - Research and demonstration projects conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine public programs or benefits.

☐ Exemption 6 - Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies.

Annual continuing applications are not required for exempt projects. If you make changes to the study's design or procedures that increase the risk to subjects or include activities that do not fall within the approved exemption category, please contact me to discuss whether or not a new application must be submitted. Any such changes or modifications must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

Please retain this letter for your files. If the research is being conducted for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, the student must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

☐ Approved consent form/s enclosed

Cc: Virginia Gunn - Advisor
Cc: Rosalie Hall - IRB Chair

Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Akrón, OH 44325-2102
330-972-7080 • 330-972-8281 Fax

The University of Akron is an Equal Education and Employment Institution

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APPENDIX B
ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONS

Participation Consent Form

This consent form outlines your rights and permits as a participant in the study of the conducted by Margaret (Peg) Bingham for her master’s thesis at the University of Akron. There are no risks anticipated to you as a participant.

The anticipated benefits include professional documentation and increased knowledge of contemporary professional machine quilting, including the history and technology of the equipment and techniques used, the practice of as a commercial endeavor, and the relationship of and its impact upon the late-twentieth century quilt revival.

Please indicate your agreement to participate below. This agreement acknowledges that your participation is entirely voluntary.

I give my permission for:
- my name, comments, and responses to be used and cited.
- the information gathered to be made public.

I will be available for follow-up contact if elaboration or clarification of my responses is required. I prefer to be contacted by:
- phone
- email

Demographic information:
- Name
- Street Address
- City
- State
- Zip
- Phone
- Email address
Professional Machine Quilter Track Survey Questions:

- How long have you been a Professional Machine Quilter?
- To date, how many total quilts have you professionally quilted (those for which you have received financial remuneration)?
- On average, how many quilts do you professionally quilt within one calendar month?
- In your business, what styles of quilting will you perform for a customer?
- In your business, what styles of quilting are most profitable?
  For your customers, what styles of quilting are most popular?
  What style of machine do you currently use for your professional quilting services?
  What Brands and Models of machine quilting equipment do you use?
- What specific features of your machine do you use regularly? Why/How?
- What accessories or add-on equipment do you attach to or use with your machine? Why/How?
- What notions and/or tools do you use in your business? Why/How? Does this notion facilitate/ease the work or does it enhance the final product?
- How many hours a week do you work on your business?
- What was your motivation for starting your professional machine business?
- What types of support did you receive from the sellers of your equipment?
  Classes or events you have attended for education, training, or support.
- Do you belong to a guild, professional or support association for Professional Machine Quilters?.
  If so, what benefits do you accrue from this membership?
- What other sources of education, training, and support do you use? Please explain.
- What aspects of your business do you enjoy?
- Describe your customer base: What marketing techniques do you employ?
  What future growth do you see in your personal machine quilting business? How will this be achieved?
- What changes have you seen in your customers, services or practices since you started professionally machine quilting?
• What changes have you seen in attitudes towards machine quilting as an artform since you entered this industry?

• What changes would you make to your business, if you could?

• What future changes in the overall industry, equipment, or the technology do you anticipate?

• Optional question: Any information you submit will be reported with no names or identifying information. It will be used strictly for research purposes and will not be used for any commercial endeavors whatsoever. Please describe your reactions when a new professional machine quilter starts a business in your area.

• Optional question: Any information you submit will be reported with no names or identifying information. It will be used strictly for research purposes and will not be used for any commercial endeavors whatsoever.

• How do you calculate the charges for your services?

Customer Track Survey Questions:

• How long have you been a customer of services?

• How many quilts have you had professionally quilted?

• What styles of quilting do you prefer?

• How many different individual Professional Machine Quilters have you employed?

• What motivated you to first employ a Professional Machine Quilter?

• How did you or do you locate a Professional Machine Quilter to employ?

• What aspects of a particular Professional Machine Quilter help you decide to work with her/him?

  How do you interact with your Professional Machine Quilters? Do you give her/him input on what you want on your quilt or do you leave it up to them or both?

• What aspects of this service make you a “repeat customer”?

• Have you ever been disappointed in the job performed? How did you handle this situation?

• What aspects of this service, other than job performance, have induced you to terminate your relationship with your Professional Machine Quilter?
• How has the availability of this service impacted your quilt top production?
• Has your attitude towards machine quilting as an artform changed since you first started quilting? Please explain.
• What changes would you make to this business/industry, if you could?

Career Professional Track Survey Questions:
• How long have you been a career professional in the machine quilting industry?
• What career do you have or role do you play in the professional quilting industry? How did you get started in the industry? What was your motivation for entering this industry?
• What is the name of the company for which you work?
• The primary business focus of this company is:
  o Professional quilting machine manufacture
  o Professional quilting machine sales
  o Quilting machine accessories or add-ons manufacture
  o Quilting machine accessories or add-ons sales
  o Supplementary equipment or notions manufacture
  o Supplementary equipment or notions sales
  o Education, training, or support
  o Marketing or promotions
• How long has this company been involved in the Industry?
• The product line for this company includes:
• How do these products contribute to the professional quilting industry?
• How/why did this company enter the professional quilting industry?
• What types of customer/user support does your company provide? What marketing techniques do you employ? Describe your customer base:
• Do you or your company support local or regional guild or support associations for Professional Machine Quilters? What benefits does your company receive from your guild/association involvement?
• What changes have you seen in your customers, services or practices since you started your career in this industry?

• Have public attitudes towards machine quilting as an artform changed since you or your company entered this industry? Please explain.

• What changes would you make to your business or industry, if you could?

• What future growth do you see for your company? How will this be accomplished?

• What future changes in the industry, equipment, or technology do you anticipate?

Hobbyist Track Survey Questions:

• How long have you owned your professional caliber machine quilting equipment?

• To date, how many quilts have you quilted on your equipment?

• On average, how many quilts do you quilt on your equipment within one calendar month?

• What styles of quilting are your favorites?

• What style of machine do you currently use?

• What Brands and Models of machine quilting equipment do you use?

• What specific features of your machine do you use regularly? Why/How?

• What accessories or add-on equipment do you attach to or use with your machine? Why/How?

• What notions and/or tools do you use in your machine quilting? Why/How? Does this notion to facilitate/ease the work or does it enhance the final product?

• What was your motivation for purchasing your professional caliber machine?

• What types of support did you receive from the sellers of your equipment?

• Classes or events you have attended for education, training, or support.

• Do you belong to a guild, professional or support association for Professional Machine Quilters? If so, what benefits do you accrue from this membership?

• What other sources of education, training, and support do you use? Please explain.
• How has owning this equipment impacted your quilt top production?

• Has your attitude towards machine quilting as an artform changed since you first started quilting? Please explain.

• What future changes in the overall industry, equipment, or the technology do you anticipate?

• What changes would you make to this business/industry, if you could?
## APPENDIX C

### SHORT-ARM MACHINE MODELS, 2010

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## APPENDIX E

### LONG-ARM MACHINE MODELS, 2010

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# APPENDIX F

## EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURERS SOURCE LIST

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<tr>
<th>Company Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Website</th>
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<tr>
<td>A-1 Quilting Machines Inc., Plank Manufacturing™</td>
<td>3232 Evans Rd. (Hwy. 65 &amp; Evans Rd.) Springfield, MO 65804</td>
<td><a href="http://www.a1quiltingmachines.com">www.a1quiltingmachines.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABM International, Inc.</td>
<td>P.O. Box 132679 The Woodlands, TX 77393-2679</td>
<td><a href="http://www.abminternational.com">www.abminternational.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>American Professional Quilting Systems (APQS)</td>
<td>23398 Hwy 30 East Carroll, IA 51401</td>
<td><a href="http://www.apqs.com">www.apqs.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Baby Lock Tacony Corporation</td>
<td>Corporate Centre 1760 Gilsinn Lane Fenton, MO 63026-0730</td>
<td><a href="http://www.babylock.com">www.babylock.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bailey's Embroidery Supply &amp; Sewing Center</td>
<td>2079 Leicester Rd. Leicester, NY 14481</td>
<td><a href="http://www.baileyssewingcenter.com">www.baileyssewingcenter.com</a></td>
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<td>Gammill Quilting Systems</td>
<td>1452 West Gibson West Plains, MO 65775</td>
<td><a href="http://www.gammill.net">www.gammill.net</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Handi Quilter, LLC</td>
<td>76 S Orchard Drive North Salt Lake, UT 84054</td>
<td><a href="http://www.handiquilter.com">www.handiquilter.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hinterberg Design Inc.</td>
<td>2805 E. Progress Drive West Bend, WI 53095</td>
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<tr>
<td>KenQuilt Manufacturing</td>
<td>4535 E. 61st Street N. Kechi, KS 67067</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kenquilt.com">www.kenquilt.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>NewJoy Quilting Products</td>
<td>5455 N. 51st Ave, Suite 103 Glendale, Arizona 85301</td>
<td><a href="http://www.newjoyquilting.com">www.newjoyquilting.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nolting Manufacturing</td>
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<td>Pennywinkle Valley Ranch</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.pennywinklevalleyranch.com">www.pennywinklevalleyranch.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prodigy Machine Corp.</td>
<td>1310 West Main Street Rock Hill, SC 29732</td>
<td><a href="http://www.prodigyquilter.com">www.prodigyquilter.com</a></td>
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<td>Proto Stitch Wizard</td>
<td>2608 Lowell Road Gastonia, NC 28054</td>
<td><a href="http://www.protostitchwizard.com">www.protostitchwizard.com</a></td>
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<td>The Quilting Solution, Inc.™</td>
<td>277 Devil Track Road Taylorsville, NC 28681</td>
<td><a href="http://www.thequiltingsolution.com">www.thequiltingsolution.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVP Worldwide Husqvarna Viking Pfaff</td>
<td>P.O. Box 7017 LaVergne, TN 37086-7017</td>
<td><a href="http://www.husqvarnaviking.com">www.husqvarnaviking.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tin Lizzie 18</td>
<td>7096 S. Redwood Road West Jordan, UT 84084</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tinlizzie18.com">www.tinlizzie18.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## APPENDIX G

### NOTIONS AND SUPPLIES SOURCE LIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>American &amp; Efird, Inc.</td>
<td>P.O. Box 507 24 American St.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.syntheticthread.com">www.syntheticthread.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurifil USA Inc.</td>
<td>500 N. Michigan Avenue. Ste. 300 Chicago, IL 60611</td>
<td><a href="http://www.aurifil.com">www.aurifil.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan Best</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bestqltr@msn.com">bestqltr@msn.com</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.bestquilter.com">www.bestquilter.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle Lord</td>
<td>RR 1, 7676 Leslie Rd. W. Puslinch, Ontario, Canada N0B 2J0</td>
<td><a href="http://www.loriclesquilting.com">www.loriclesquilting.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Grids</td>
<td>400 W. Dussel Dr. Maumee, OH 43537</td>
<td><a href="http://www.creativegridsusa.com">www.creativegridsusa.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edge Rider Wheels</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td><a href="http://www.edgeriderwheels.com">www.edgeriderwheels.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden Threads</td>
<td>245 W. Roosevelt Road, Suite 61 West Chicago, IL 60185</td>
<td><a href="http://www.goldenthreads.com">www.goldenthreads.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hartley Manufacturing, Inc.</td>
<td>4803 S. Ironwood Drive Saint George, Utah 84790</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hobbs Bonded Fibers</td>
<td>200 South Commerce Dr. Waco, Texas 76710</td>
<td>hobbsbondedfibers.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off the Edge Supplies, LLC</td>
<td>P.O. Box 448 1204 Cherry Street Dallas Center, IA 50063</td>
<td>offtheedgequilting.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SewBatik c/o Firefly LLC</td>
<td>879 Main Street West Mayville, ND 58257</td>
<td><a href="http://www.sewbatik.com">www.sewbatik.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sulky of America</td>
<td>980 Cobb Place Blvd., Suite 130 Kennesaw, GA 30144</td>
<td><a href="http://www.sulky.com">www.sulky.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior Threads</td>
<td>87 East 2580 South St. George, UT 84790</td>
<td><a href="http://www.superiorthreads.com">www.superiorthreads.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Warm Company</td>
<td>5529 186th Place SW Lynnwood, Washington 98037</td>
<td><a href="http://www.warmcompany.com">www.warmcompany.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YLI Corporation</td>
<td>1439 Dave Lyle Blvd. Rock Hill, SC 29730</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ylicorp.com">www.ylicorp.com</a></td>
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</tbody>
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