

The Seminole Quilting Style

The Seminoles are American Indians that live in the Southeastern United States in the States of Florida and Southern Georgia. The area in which they live is the swampy everglades, also the home of alligators and many beautiful birds including the Egrets. Other Seminoles live in Oklahoma, where they were relocated following the Indian wars of the 1830's.

Quiltmaking is not a frequent activity among the Seminoles. Before fabric became available, their clothing was made of hides and skins. But the Seminole quilting style really developed in the early 1900's. Seminole patchwork has become a well known and distinguishing feature of the Seminole Indians.

Seminole quilting originated from the Seminole patchwork used for clothing by these southeastern Native Americans. In the late 1800s it was a long trip from the Everglades to trade for cotton cloth so women began sewing strips made from the fabric left on the end of the bolts to make what was know as "strip clothing". It involves sewing solid pieces of fabric together to form designs in strips. These strips are joined together to form decorative bands of fabric which are often used in skirts, blouses and other articles of clothing. Often quite a variety of colorful fabrics are used in a single garment.



Doll wearing Seminole Quilted Dress



Seminole Indian

The sewing machine became available to these women around the turn of the century making it possible to use much smaller strips. Seminole designs grew to become even more elaborate and complex. Shortly before 1920, a new decorative technique was developed by Seminole women - the now famous patchwork. Seminole patchwork is very complex geometric designs made from fabric strips which are sewn together, cut apart, and sewn back together in new formations. Early designs were blocks or bars of alternating color or often a sawtooth design. These bands of designs were sewn directly into the body of the garment, forming an integral part of it. Seminole patchwork was usually used for traditional dress including the women's long full skirts and big patchwork shirts worn by the men. Garments were adorned with patchwork that sometimes reflected the wearer's clan.

Then, as in now, many garments were made for the growing tourist industry. Even today these garments are worn for special occasions. These beautiful Seminole patchwork patterns eventually become popular in quilt making as well, and their techniques have made significant contributions to quilting as well.

Here are some Links of interest:

- [The Seminole Tribe in Florida](#)
- [Seminole Patchwork](#)
- [Seminole Clothing: Colorful Patchwork](#)
- [19th Century Seminole Clothing](#)
- [The Mathematics of Seminole Patchwork](#)
- [An Essay on Patchwork](#)
- [The Seminole Tribe in Oklahoma](#)