Mary Sheppard Burton Collection

AFC 2006/005

Guides to the Collections in the Archive of Folk Culture



American Folklife Center, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
September 2006

Contact information: http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/folklife.contact

Catalog Record: https://lccn.loc.gov/2007700232

Additional search options available at: https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/eadafc.af010001

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Encoded by Valda Morris-Slack, February 2011

Collection Summary

Collection Number: AFC 2006/005
Title: Mary Sheppard Burton Collection
Inclusive Dates: 1993-2006
Location: Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Extent (Manuscripts): 3 folders of manuscript material including 1 pamphlet (12 p.)
Extent (Artifacts): 12 hooked rugs : hand-dyed wool on 12-thread count linen ; circa 45 x 69 in. and smaller
Extent (Moving Images): 3 VHS videocassettes: sound, color; 1/2 in.
Extent (Graphic Images): 1 folder of 25 4 x 6 in. color photographic prints and negatives
Creator: Burton, Mary Sheppard
Language: English
LC Catalog record: https://lccn.loc.gov/2007700232
Summary: The collection contains hooked rugs and documentation of the craftsmanship of rug hooking artist, Mary Sheppard Burton, of Germantown, Maryland. Her *Tell Me 'Bout Series* consists of 12 rugs created between 1993 and 2005 that interpret the history of her family.
Online Content: The entire series of rugs can be viewed on the American Folklife website at http://www.loc.gov/folklife/msburton/index.html. Copyright restrictions apply.

Scope and Content

The collection consists of twelve rugs hooked with hand-dyed wool on 12-thread-count linen titled the *Tell Me 'Bout Series* created by Mary Sheppard Burton from Germantown, Maryland. The rugs, which were created between 1993 and 2005, depict stories of rural life and historical events experienced by different members of Burton's family. These stories, some of which have been passed down for generations, include scenes of life on the Chesapeake Bay and surrounding areas in Maryland. Burton retold this family history as bedtime stories for her four children. She designed and made this series of hooked rugs which artistically retold the stories. Color photographs of Mary Sheppard Burton with American Folklife Center director Peggy A. Bulger were taken by David A. Taylor in 2006. Burton was interviewed at her home by Theadocia Austen and Carl Lindahl, circa 2001. During the interview Burton gave a tour of her house, describing the history of the various rooms and the many pieces of art on display throughout her house.

Biographical History

Mary Sheppard Burton was born in 1922 in Salisbury, Maryland. Burton, who became a textile artist and teacher, was no stranger to the art as a child since both her great grandmother and grandmother were rug hookers. From 1973 to 1988 Burton taught classes on designing, dyeing, color theory, hook art and traditional hooking techniques at various schools and colleges throughout the United States. Occasionally Burton also taught private classes at her home in Maryland. Her students were diverse, from ninth-grade students to adults as well as the mentally challenged. The individuals who studied under Burton were not only based in the United States but also came from England and Israel. During this period she lectured extensively and exhibited her pieces throughout the United States, Canada, and Japan. Burton was instrumental in developing the guidelines and standards for rug hooking and judging hooked rugs at local and international competitions.

In 1981, Burton's dedication and love for the art led her to research the hand dyeing of textiles and the color retention of dyes by experimenting with vegetable dyes used by earlier generations. She experimented with the different effects that light has upon yarn. Burton used dyeing techniques that were not commonly used by textile artists. Burton studied the historical origins of rug hooking, starting her research at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, continuing at the Textile Museum in Canada in 1996, and in Nova Scotia in 1997.

In 1994, Burton co-founded the International Guild of Hand-hooked Rug Makers (TIGHER) and in 1996 was awarded an antique pewter loving cup for outstanding devotion and service to the organization.

For her outstanding accomplishments in the art, Mary Sheppard Burton has received many awards. She was the first non-Canadian recipient of two of the highest awards given by the Ontario Hooking Craft Guild: Best in Show for Creativity and Craftsmanship and Best in Show for Artistic Presentation of Work and Originality.

In 2002, she co-authored a book on creativity in textile arts, *A Passion for the Creative Life: Textiles to Lift the Spirit,* with Mary Ellen Cooper. She died on July 1, 2010.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People
Austen, Theadocia Millich
Burton, Mary Sheppard--Interviews.
Burton, Mary Sheppard.
Lindahl, Carl, 1947-

Organizations
American Folklife Center.
Archive of Folk Culture (Library of Congress)

Subjects
Families in art.
Narrative art, American--Chesapeake Bay Region (Md. and Va.)
Pictorial rugs--Chesapeake Bay Region (Md. and Va.)
Rugs, Hooked--Maryland.
Storytelling in art.
Textile artists--Maryland--Interviews.

Places
Germantown (Montgomery County, Md.)

Titles
Family portraits.
Footsteps on history, tell me 'bout series.
Tell me 'bout series.

Form/Genre
Interviews (Sound recordings).
Pictorial rugs.
Videocassettes.

Arrangement

The manuscripts and photographs (PH01-PH25) are housed in Box 1.The rugs, with the exception of the two rugs on display, are housed in customized boxes.

Access

The manuscripts, photographs, and reference copies of videotapes MV01 and MV02 are available upon request in the Folklife Reading Room. MV03 is damaged and unplayable. The original hooked rugs are stored offsite for preservation. Consult reference staff in the Folklife Reading Room about viewing the rugs. As of Febrary 2011, two rugs from the collection are on display in the American Folklife Center in the Jefferson Building: Rug 3, *The Secret Place*, and Rug 10, *First Meals on Wheels*.

Online Content

The entire series of rugs can be viewed on the American Folklife website at http://www.loc.gov/folklife/msburton/index.html. Copyright restrictions apply.

Acquisition

The twelve hooked rugs were donated to the American Folklife Center by Mary Sheppard Burton on March 2, 2006.

Preferred Citation

Cite as: Mary Sheppard Burton Collection (AFC 2006/005), Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Collection Concordance by Format

Quantity	Physical Extent	Item Numbers
Manuscript Materials		
3	folders	BOX 1, FOLDERS 1-3
Graphic Images		
50	25 color photographs; 25 color negatives	BOX 1, FOLDER 4
Artifacts		
12	hand-dyed wool 45x60 inches and smaller	BOXES 2-13
Moving Images		
3	VHS videocassettes	MV01-MV03

Description of Series

Container	Series
	Manuscript Materials
	Graphic Images
	Artifacts
	Moving Images

Collection Inventory

Container	Contents
	Manuscript Materials
BOX 1 **FOLDER** 1	Finding Aid (This document)
BOX 1 **FOLDER** 2	"Footsteps on History, Tell Me 'Bout Series: Family Portraits." Mary Sheppard Burton. Undated. 6 pages.
BOX 1 **FOLDER** 3	Photograph Log: PH01-PH25
	Graphic Images
BOX 1 **FOLDER** 4	Photographs and Negatives: PH01-PH25 Photographs taken by David A. Taylor on March 2, 2006. 25 color photographs, 25 color negatives.
	Artifacts
BOX 2	Rug 1. *When Pa Was Young - Skating the Bay* The rug displays an image of Mary Sheppard Burton's grandfather, Edward Sampson Phipps, skating across the Chesapeake Bay. *Tell Me 'Bout Series*, 1993-1994. Dimensions: 45 x 69 inches.
BOX 3	Rug 2. *When Pa Was Young - The Tool Fetcher* The rug displays an image of Edward Sampson Phipps, Mary Sheppard Burton's grandfather, who dove into the Susquehanna River retrieving the tools that had been dropped into the river by the workmen who were constructing the bridge above the river. *Tell Me 'Bout Series*, 1993. Dimensions: 46.5 x 32.5 inches.
BOX 4	Rug 3. *The Secret Place* The rug displays an image of Alice Phipps, Mary Sheppard Burton's mother, in a tree with an apple and reading a book. This was her mother's secret place. *Tell Me 'Bout Series*, 1994. Dimensions: 43.75 x 52.25 inches.
BOX 5	Rug 4. *Strawberry Capital of the World* The rug depicts images from the town of Pittsville, Maryland, where Burton's father John Raymond Sheppard grew up. *Tell Me 'Bout Series*, 1994-1995. Dimensions: 62 x 43 inches.
BOX 6	Rug 5. *When Dad Was Two* The rug depicts the image of a two-year-old Charles Burton, Mary Sheppard Burton's husband, head first in the snow. He was accidently given grape wine instead of grape juice. *Tell Me 'Bout Series*, 1995. Dimensions: 44.25 x 33 inches.
BOX 7	Rug 6. *The Bushel Basket Hat* The rug displays the image of Alice Phipps, Burton's mother, as she flew upside down in a plane in a bushel basket hat. The rug also displays the image of the hat as it falls from the sky. *Tell Me 'Bout Series*, 1996. Dimensions: 49.5 x 59.5 inches.
BOX 8	Rug 7. *A Chicken in Every Pot* The rug displays Charles Burton, Mary's Sheppard Burton's husband, as he climbed a tree to witness the inauguration of Herbert Hoover. The rug also displays images of chickens and roosters. The rug refers to Hoover's famous promise of "a chicken in every pot." *Tell Me 'Bout Series*, 1996. Dimensions: 66 x 44 inches.

Container	Contents
BOX 9	Rug 8. *Fox Hunting at Sycamore Hollow* The rug depicts images of men on horses at Sycamore Hollow in Montgomery County, Maryland. In the center Burton weaves a landmark barn which dates back to 1838. *Tell Me 'Bout Series*, 1998. Dimensions: 66 x 44 inches.
BOX 10	Rug 9. *Chicken Fishin'* Nellie Blaine Lankford was Mary Sheppard Burton's mother-in-law. The rug depicts the images of Nellie and her sister Anna in Tyaskin, Maryland. The two would feed the chickens kernels that were attached to the end of a fishing line. *Tell Me 'Bout Series*, 1999. Dimensions: 39 x 46 inches.
BOX 11	Rug 10. *The First Meals on Wheels* Alice Phipps, Mary Sheppard Burton's mother, would deliver food to the sick. This rug shows Alice on a bike along with other landmarks in Salisbury, Maryland. *Tell Me 'Bout Series*, 1999. Dimensions: 42 x 58 inches.
BOX 12	Rug 11. *Day's End on the Sinepuxent Bay* Richard Dale, a relative of Mary Sheppard Burton, is depicted steering a sailboat on the Maryland coast. Richard Dale fought against pirates and also assisted in defending the island of Bermuda against the British. *Tell Me 'Bout Series*, 2000. Dimensions: 19.25 x 34.5 inches.
BOX 13	Rug 12. *When Mom was Wee, Mary Sheppard Burton's Story* The rug depicts images of the Model A Ford, along with pigs on a farm and a little girl who represents Mary Sheppard Burton's mother. *Tell Me 'Bout Series*, 2005. Dimensions: 44.2 x 31 inches.
	Moving Images
MV 01	Tape 1 of 2 Interview with Mary Sheppard Burton at her home in Germantown, Md. Undated. 1 VHS videocassette.
MV 02	Tape 2 of 2 Interview with Mary Sheppard Burton at her home in Germantown, Md. Undated. 1 VHS videotape.
MV 03	Tape of Mary Burton talking about her rugs. June 8, 2000. Interview with Mary Sheppard Burton at her home in Germantown, Md. Undated 1 VHS videotape. [Unplayable - Damaged]