

HIGHFIELD MEMBERS OF THE LDS (MORMON) CHURCH FEATURE QUILTING  
SKILLS AT CHURCH RELIEF SOCIETY FAIR IN HARARE

Women members of the Highfield Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints displayed the quilting skills which they have been learning since May of this year to members and guests of the Harare Branch of the church, which is located at 67 Enterprise Road in Highlands.

The occasion was a Relief Society fair which featured "How to make a dress in an hour", "outdoor cooking, including survival skills", a Luncheon for members and guests, during which luncheon fashion models were shown, and then at one PM the Highfield ladies demonstrated quilting skills, showing the ladies present several different ways of making quilts.

A quilt is two pieces of fabric with an inner layer of what is called "batting". Modern batting is made up of a fluffy layer of Dacron which resembles Cotton. It is of various thicknesses, but is durable, warm, light and washable. American batting comes in standard Single, Double, Queen and King Size. South African batting usually comes in double bed size, any length desired.

The project was started among the African Highfield Branch when a member of the Relief Society General Board of the Church visited Zimbabwe in 1981. The Relief Society is the women's auxiliary of the church, and General Board Members travel from America to visit all over the world to see how the Church's program is benefiting the women of the Church. When Sister Evans, the General Board member visiting in 1981 was in Zimbabwe, she was impressed that Quilting, an old American Sewing Art, might be of benefit to the sisters here in Zimbabwe, both to increase their home-making skills, but also, perhaps to give them a skill from which they could earn money to supplement their incomes.

Since "batting" was unattainable in Zimbabwe, the general Board of the Relief Society sent several batts so that the sisters could get started learning.

About the same time a missionary couple, Dns H. Tracy Hall and his wife, were called to serve in Zimbabwe to work with the Highfield Branch. Their special assignment was to train the branch members there to learn the skills which they need to operate the branch by themselves as leaders, teachers, and members, and to strengthen them in church Doctrine and Theory. In addition, Sister Hall was asked by Sister Evans to teach the Sisters to quilt.

Quilting is a Sewing Art form as old as America is. In Early America the women would cut out usable and still good parts of worn clothing, and save them. These would be cut in various shapes and colors and when a woman had enough of these joined into a size to fit her bed, she would invite her neighbors for a "quilting Bee" and they would put the quilt on a frame, which stretched it and held it together. A "quilting Bee" is a great occasion to socialize, and this has been true of the "quilting Bees" held to learn the art in Zimbabwe.

As the Art of Quilting in America became more sophisticated, and as the pioneer families became established and more affluent, the quilts became Art Forms instead of just the practical form of making something out of nothing. The women began to add to their skills, putting their "Patch Work" pieces together in beautiful patterns, making their own patterns from new materials by doing Applique work in beautiful forms, etc. Many of these old quilts are still in families and bring a premium price in America if they appear on the market.