



*"Patterns for Learning," featuring the collections of quilt historian Mary Barton, is on exhibit at the State Historical Society of Iowa through October 19, 2008.*



## Patterns for Learning

### ❖ *The Mary Barton Quilt Collection* ❖

Between 1987 and 2001, Mary Barton of Ames, Iowa, donated more than 1,500 items to the State Historical Society of Iowa. Most of these items related to her work as an amateur historian documenting the life and times of 19th-century and early 20th-century quilting women.

Now, a new museum exhibit, "Patterns for Learning," features Mary Barton's quilt sample notebooks, fashion print collection, catalogs, a large number of her quilt study panels (see left), items from her clothing collection, and, of course, quilts.

A special feature will be the Mary Barton Heritage Quilt, which was voted one of the 20th century's Best American Quilts and exhibited at the 1999 International Quilting Show.

As a whole, the Mary Barton Quilt Collection presents a microcosm of quilting history. Beginning with the oldest quilt in the collection, a LeMoyne Star (circa 1940), and continuing through a plethora of quilting periodicals, one can see how quilting fell in and out of favor, changing back and forth from a necessary skill to a leisure activity in accordance with the times.

In addition to quilts, Barton assembled a world-class collection of materials and documentation that today helps us understand the quilting woman—what she read, what she wore, her choices in fabrics and patterns, the demands on her time, and how those demands changed with improvements in her way of life. ❖

