

# QUILT LABELS – HOW TO DO IT AND WHY IT MATTERS!

Santa Rosa Quilt Guild

TSW – Bonnie Butler-Sibbald, Coordinator



How often have we experienced or heard stories like this: ‘My grandmother made this Double Wedding Ring quilt for the marriage of one of my aunts. I’m not sure which aunt but she was married during World War II, I think.

Herein lies the marvelous value of attaching quilt labels to every quilt you make. Imagine this label on the same quilt: ‘Made by Elizabeth Sidwell Smith for her daughter Agnes Marie on the occasion of her wedding, October 10, 1933, in Provincetown, Mass., to Edward Henry Adams.’

Twenty-six words vault that quilt from hundreds of the “nice to look at” Double Wedding Ring quilts made in that era to “documented American history” and “treasured family heirloom.”

What matters is that you think through the value and importance of labeling even those quilts for the kids/grandkids/dog bed you expect to be loved to death in a short while. Your work counts for something. Your love of quilting is a Big Deal in our culture of producing art and love in one fell swoop.

A label on your quilt vastly improves anything and everything about it. You grant your quilt instant posterity and meaning that is otherwise lost.

Labeling your quilt is not bragging. It is simply giving everyone who comes along to see it or hang it or collect it or love it to pieces the most accurate description you could provide at the moment of its creation. Make the label-one that fits the quilt, the occasion, the feeling, the process, the recipient, current history, your hope for the future, and you. **Just. Label. It.**

## Decisions, Decisions

Quilt labels come in all shapes, sizes, materials and styles, so you can experiment and figure out what works for you. If you have any interest in entering your quilt into a gallery or show, one main requirement is a label, so you might as well start labeling all your quilts!

You can ink, embroider, stitch, quilt, paint, computer print, use embellishments and photos. Space available for labeling includes patches, blocks, sashing, borders, the binding, the back, the sleeve, a pocket sewn either front or back to hold a precious letter/label. Quilt labels can be flashy or discreet, plain or fancy, part of the design or intended to blend in so as to constitute a treasure hunt. One word of advice: Make labels difficult to erase, remove or cover to discourage theft.

Your choice will also depend on your plans for the quilt: Are you giving it away? If so, who'll be receiving it, and for what purpose? Weigh these factors too.

Also, consider the details you'll want on the label. Chances are, you'll want your own name on there, along with the date and the place where you made the quilt. If you're giving it as a gift, adding the recipient's name is a sweet touch. Is the quilt meant for a special occasion? Add that on your label too, along with any meaningful quotes that speak to you. It's all about what your recipient or someone in the future may want to know about you and what inspired you to create this quilt. You're making history here!

For all, starch, starch, starch the heck out the fabric .. so it's super stiff, like paper. Not only is it much easier to write on, but it will absorb the ink better and less likely to smudge or run. Especially important with Sharpies.

# How to Make Your Own Quilt Label

## Handwritten Labels

### What You Need

- Permanent marking pen \* see end notes on pens
- Small piece of fabric (around 4-by-6 inch or 5-by-7 inch)
- Freezer paper for stabilizing fabric while writing (4-by-6 inch) or blue painters' tape
- Needle and thread for attaching the label to the quilt

### 1. Print Out a Label

**Strongly suggested for a handwritten label:** Start by printing or typing all your label information into a blank document. Then arrange the words to fit the size of your label and adjust the font size as needed. Printing this all out on paper will help you see what the info will look like when you write it out by hand. Think of this as your handwritten pattern.

Iron the wrong side of your label fabric to the shiny side of a piece of freezer paper.

The freezer paper will stabilize the fabric so it doesn't shift while you're writing on it.

Stand near a window or a light box and lay the stabilized fabric over the printout you made. Use the content on the printout as a guide for your label. You don't need to trace it, although you could. But it works if you just use it to guide where and how you write the information onto your label, so the words are the right size and follow a straight line. This way, you'll also make sure not to make mistakes as you write your label by hand. An Optional technique is to use blue painters' tape on the back of the fabric instead of freezer paper as a stabilizer and to prevent pen "bleed through".

Use pins to hold the label in place on the lower corner of your quilt. Then appliqué the label onto your quilt using a slip stitch, which will be invisible. Make sure not to let your stitches go all the way through to the quilt front. An Optional technique is to fold the label into a triangle and pin the label into the binding edges of a corner before finishing the binding.

And ... there's your autograph, right on the quilt!! Another idea is to use a leftover block from the quilt, so the label looks like it belongs on that exact quilt and nowhere else. Go ahead and get as creative as you want: Think of this quilt, and the label you just made, as your own personal forever stamp.

## Print Your Label on Fabric Backed Freezer Paper

1. To start, cut a piece of freezer paper and light-colored fabric slightly larger than a standard piece of printer paper (in the US, that's 8 1/2" x 11").
2. Place the freezer paper shiny side down on the wrong side of the fabric. The freezer paper will stick a bit.
3. With an iron on the cotton setting, press the freezer paper onto the fabric until it sticks (this only takes a few seconds.) Be safe and use a pressing cloth!
4. Using your ruler and rotary cutter, trim them both to the exact size of regular printer paper.

5. Now, you can feed your fabric-and-freezer-paper sheet into your printer as if it was printing paper! You may have to change a setting on your printer so that you can feed the "thick paper" into a tray in the back, but other than that, it's easy-peasy!
6. After you print, simply peel off the freezer paper and voila! You have your very own quilting label.

Heat set the ink with a dry press cloth and hot iron. It should be permanent at that point.

## Getting Creative:

- 1) Embroider info within a block on the front...blending, small as not to distract from design.
- 2) Using your embroidery machine, stitch out details in a single, long strip, then sew it along edge of binding to blend with the backing (next to, not on the binding).

## PENS:

Highly recommended: Sakura **Pigma® Micron® pens**, which are permanent on fabric. Micron pens are acid-free and archival. Size 005 or 05 is best for very small, fine writing, but it must be used with a very light touch. The nibs do not dry out, they are waterproof, quick drying pigmented inks that will not bleed through the thinnest of papers or fabrics. Ink once it has dried is permanent, fade resistant and smear proof even under sun light or UV light.

**Sharpie pens** deliver the same bold, smooth, high-quality writing experience of the classic Sharpie marker with the performance of a pen that doesn't bleed through paper. ... The non-toxic ink of each Sharpie pen is waterproof and smear- and fade-resistant, for archival-quality journaling and scrapbooking. Although Sharpies are waterproof, they are only meant to be waterproof on paper, not fabric. They will bleed in the washer over time and develop a yellowish tinge. Test on sample with same amount of starch. Different fabrics will produce different results. Some take the Sharpie well, but others don't, it just soaks in. Your fabric must be completely dry, or the ink will bleed.

**Uniball Signo gel pens** can be used for a signature quilt or label. Heat set. One source stated that they seemed to work very well, easy to use, ink shows up nicely. A quilt-shop owner tested samples, on which she used several types of permanent pens. She had washed and ironed each a few times, and the gel was the only one that didn't blur or fade. They do roll nicely across the fabric. Again note - put masking tape across the back of the fabric where you're going to write. This provides a stiffness and keeps the fabric from stretching while you work.