

4-H SEAMSTRESSES

Back in the 1930s, 4-H clubs were a popular way to have fun while learning the skills they promoted. The four H's stand for head, heart, hands and health. My sisters and I became members of the local club. Our projects were keyed to "hands and health."

To accomplish the goal of "H for hands," sewing was our favorite activity. At home, Mom let us use left-over fabric to make blankets and pillows for our dolls. By training our feet to peddle smoothly, my sisters and I mastered the challenging skill of using her treadle sewing machine.

Making aprons was our first 4-H project. After selecting a flowered calico fabric, our leaders instructed us in laying the pattern, pinning it and cutting it out. Next we basted the pieces together and finally sewed the seams on the treadle sewing machine. Proudly we showed our aprons to Mom and Dad, and wore them when baking cookies or helping cook dinner. We felt quite grown up.

Our next sewing project was green gingham gym bloomers to wear for a 4-H health skit. We giggled a lot as we practiced the exercises in unison, pretending to be showgirls. After the program, Mom and Dad told us we did well and we joined the audience for punch and cookies.



Wearing their Projects

One year, Margaret was honored to be the county representative for the Iowa 4-H Congress in Ames, Iowa. She made the 4-H Middy style dress that all representatives wore. We were very proud of her.

We soon acquired quite a few left-over pieces of colorful fabric and decided to make quilts with them. Margaret chose the *Wedding Ring* pattern and I chose *Sunbonnet Girls*. Alice decided to make a skirt for the orange-crate desk she was making.

After painting the three box-crates in which oranges had been shipped, Alice set two of the boxes on end and placed a wide board across them to form her desk. The third crate was also set on end with the top removed to form her chair. Each crate had a wooden divider in the middle that became shelves for the desk and a seat for her chair. Gathering a long length of fabric, Alice created a skirt for the desk, and then made a cushion for her chair.

While Alice worked on her project, Margaret and I began our quilts with help from Mom and Grandma. We cut, arranged, and stitched those quilt blocks all summer. My Sunbonnet Girls were appliquéd, or hand-sewn, on white percale squares. I was glad to have Mom and Grandma join in, but I was thrilled when Auntie Pearl appliquéd a Sunbonnet girl for me, for she had made many quilts. When the squares were ready to be made into a quilt, yellow percale fabric was purchased for framing them. Mom then took the quilt top to the local church ladies to finish. They quilted, chatted, and exchanged local news and recipes while their fingers stitched those tiny stitches.



My Sunbonnet Girl Quilt

A Kaleidoscope of Memories

This quilt is now over 75 years old and is filled with fond memories. It serves as the cover for my bed today. Margaret's Wedding Ring quilt is a treasured possession in her family. Alice's desk set was used for several years before she outgrew it, and then it became a shelf for house plants.

A lifelong love of sewing settled in during those youthful years in our 4-H club.

Thirty years later—

In the nineteen sixties, the opportunity came to form a new 4-H Club with several neighborhood girls and my two daughters, Marie and Diane. The 9 to 12-year old girls voted to use 'Mod Models' as their club name. Marie had been a 4-H member for several years and became their Junior Leader.



Three Hold their Snazzy Snakes

Dorothy Adair Gonick

The club's first project was making a Snazzy Snake. The girls were given the experience of coordinating fabrics, cutting, sewing, and matching seams, then making a placket to form the gaping mouth. Diane's creature now serves as a door draft-dodger in its old age.

At the annual 4H dress revue, the girls modeled the clothes they had made, along with their snazzy snakes. I was proud that my daughter, Marie Gonick, received the county award for her outfit.



PAMELA RULE MODELED a long, rose-colored evening gown she made herself at the New Haven County 4-H Dress Revue last Friday. Marie Gonick modeled a three-piece rust-colored woolen outfit including a fur-trimmed coat. Marie won the county award for her creation and will participate in the state contest.

Another thirty years later— I now have two granddaughters who have become adept at using the sewing machine, although they haven't carried on the tradition of becoming 4-H'ers. Their mother, Diane, and I are ever-ready to lend a hand and a bit of instruction when requested. The love of creating fabric into fashion lives on.

ONE ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE

We had never noticed the nearby abandoned schoolhouse until Uncle Dewey visited in the summer of 1930. He had recently been hired to teach commercial subjects at Proviso Township High School in Maywood, Illinois. That summer, Dewey had gained permission to use the former schoolhouse to practice his skill of shorthand script.

Years earlier, Dewey and his brothers had attended this school. Now, he filled those large blackboards with the swirls and curves of shorthand writing. We often accompanied him and played school. He tried to teach us the intricacies of making those symbols, but without much success.

A couple more 'pupils' joined the class when Uncle Fred's family came for a visit. Their daughters Ruth and Naomi were both aspiring artists. They drew many pictures on those blackboards, inspiring us to try also. One day while browsing through a storage closet, we discovered a hand-wound phonograph and a stack of records. Soon music filled the room. The recording of "A Frog He Would A-Wooing Go," caused hilarious giggles about a frog wooing a mouse. Ruth liked the rhythm and nonsense of that song and suggested we create a dance; we kids readily joined in.

The laughter was so contagious that Uncle Dewey put down his chalk and joined in. We girls don't remember how to write shorthand script, but still laugh about the afternoon we brought the old schoolhouse to life.

PIANISTS

I love listening to my grandchildren play the piano. It always brings me back to sitting in the parlor with Grandma Adair at her pump organ. We kids would all sing along as she played a jolly rendition of "Oh Where Oh Where Has My Little Dog Gone". We begged her to let us play. Pumping the organ with our feet was quite a trick to master.

Our interest in playing led our folks to answer a newspaper ad for a piano.