

Mercer, Nova



Quilter, Soapmaker, and Ballad Singer

Nova Mercer is a native of the Hill Country of North Central Louisiana. As a child she grew up steeped in the traditional culture of the area around the Weston Community in Jackson Parish. She heard the old ballads and remembered them. She also learned to do the basic things which girls of her time and place learned-quilting, all forms of sewing, soapmaking, and cooking. Nova has been recognized for her many art forms through invitations to perform at state and national folk festivals including the Festival of American Folklife in Washington, D.C. As a girl, Nova learned simple quilt patterns including the "nine patch." After her children were grown, she began to make what she calls the "fancier" quilts. She also worked hard to improve her stitching techniques. She bought special fabrics and used these fabrics in making such complex patterns as the "radiant star."

Although Nova still quilts her pieced and appliqued tops on a frame suspended from her living room ceiling as she did in her early days, she rarely makes simple everyday quilts. Instead, she produces finely stitched quilts which she exhibits and saves for heirlooms.

While Nova has become nationally famous and she maintains strong local ties, working with such important cultural preservationists as Sybil Womack who has struggled for many years to preserve and present the folk traditions of North Winn and Southern Jackson parishes. Several times a year, Nova presents her traditional art at festivals organized and promoted by the Backwoods Village Inn located on Louisiana Hwy. 126 between Readhimer and Brewton's Mill.