



MARCH 2023



Our Mission

The Sewing Labs is an inclusive and welcoming community teaching the legacy of sewing for employment, entrepreneurship, and enrichment.

Message from the Executive Director

Dear friends and supporters,

I am thrilled to join this wonderful community as the new

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month of March, I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible achievements of women throughout history and celebrate Women's History Month.

Women have always played a critical role in shaping our world, yet their contributions have often been overlooked or minimized. It is through the tireless efforts of women throughout history that we have made great strides towards equality and justice. From the suffragettes who fought for women's right to vote, to the civil rights activists who marched for equal treatment under the law, to the women who continue to advocate for gender parity today, we owe so much to those who have come before us.



Robyn Kerkaert,
Executive Director

As a woman and the new leader of this organization, I am committed to continuing this legacy of progress. I am honored to be in a position where I can work with such a dedicated team to support and empower our community. Whether we are providing a safe space and respite for our community to come together and learn and create, helping people access education and job training, or advocating for opportunities that promote equality, we are working to build a better future, and that all began with the women who had the dream to create The Sewing Labs.

I am inspired by the women who have come before, and I am excited to see what the future holds. The Sewing Labs has a big role to play, and I am honored to be able to be part of shaping the vision for us.

Let us celebrate the women who have made history, and let us continue to work together towards a better tomorrow.

Thank you for your continued support.

Best Regards,

Robyn Kerkaert

Mary Brooks Picken: The Soul of Sewing

You may not have heard of her, but if you've ever picked up the *Singer Sewing Book* in your sewing library, you've already encountered the writing and impeccable

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date, the Singer Sewing Book has sold more than 8 million copies since being published in 1949.

Picken wrote many more books– a whopping 91– but her writing is only a small part of her amazing legacy. Before women had even received the right to vote, she forged her own path of success through a means of creativity that was one of the most accessible and available for women in the early 1900s: sewing. Picken was an international authority on dressmaking, fashion, and domestic arts, and her career started right here in Kansas City.

It was here that she settled with her first husband and began her sewing career by teaching sewing courses at the YWCA (Young Woman's Christian Association) and to female inmates at the Leavenworth Penitentiary. After her husband died, she was appointed instructor at the KC American College of Dressmaking, which provided women with education on industrial sewing — an opportunity the average woman seldom came across, as the majority of them had to work at home as mothers or homemakers. Picken did her job so well that she was recruited by the ICS (International Correspondance Schools) to found The Woman's Institute of Domestic Arts and Sciences in Scranton, Pennsylvania. The institute's goal was to give women and girls everywhere a chance to work and provide for themselves and their families.

Out of Mary Brooks Picken's huge library of books she authored, one of her most popular was *Thimblefuls of Friendliness*, published in 1924. This book contained Picken's musings and life advice for other aspiring homemakers. In addition, she also edited and contributed to *Inspiration*, the Woman's Institute's monthly newsletter.

You can find excerpts of Picken's insightful philosophy in [Vintage Notions: An Inspirational Guide to Sewing, Fashion, and Home Improvement](#)



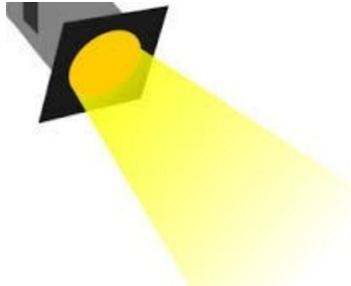
Mary Brooks Picken (Wiki Commons)



The Women's Institute Monthly Newsletter (Amy Barickman)

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future reading on everything Mary Brooks Picken and contains patterns, techniques, recipes, and tips she taught at the Woman's Institute, as well as Amy's "Modern Notions" reflecting on Picken's wisdom each month/chapter.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Highlighting our Students and Supporters



Board Member Spotlight: Amy Barickman

The Sewing Labs continues to grow with the addition of Amy Barickman as our newest board member. She brings an entrepreneurial mindset and over 30 years of experience in the creative arts industry to our TSL team. Barickman is the founder and president of Indygo Junction, a fabric arts publishing company. In 1990 Barickman founded Indygo Junction, a fabric arts publishing company. Her company was recently acquired by Prym Consumer USA, allowing Amy to explore new opportunities developing patterns and products under her personal brand at [AmyBarickman.com](https://www.AmyBarickman.com).

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She's also long been a lover of all things vintage. Where one person might see a piece of old fabric and textile and throw it away, Barickman starts thinking about how it can be repurposed and made new again. Not only does she enjoy creating vintage-inspired designs, but she also collects vintage ephemera, art, and books.

"I feel like there's such great design work from the past, and it was different than designs are created today. Back then, it was truly all done by hand and not by computer," says Barickman.

Barickman's collection of vintage items includes many books, magazines, photos, and other items from Mary Brooks Picken.

She first discovered Picken while browsing online for vintage artwork for one of her many businesses, The Vintage Workshop. One day, she struck gold when she stumbled onto some material from The Woman's Institute newsletter, *Inspiration*, which included Picken's work.

"I loved the imagery and the stories and how [the institute] helped women learn to sew and start their own businesses," says Barickman. "Once I read some of the essays in the newsletters, particularly by Mary Brooks Picken, I was consumed by the content. It was so relevant and timeless."

Her discovery of Picken led her to write *Vintage Notions*, lovingly dedicated to Scranton's Woman's Institute and the founder herself. When looking at the two women, it's easy to see how Barickman has been inspired by Picken. Her love of vintage is infused into everything she does, but Mary Brooks Picken is special; Barickman sees her as a muse.

Perhaps Barickman is so inspired by Picken because she too is an entrepreneur. Whether it's working on a new DIY course for her [Vintage Modern Makers](#) program, thinking up new sewing patterns such as her Fold and Go Folio, or writing content for her blog, she's always working on some kind of new project.

If you're interested in keeping with Amy Barickman's vintage-inspired sewing ideas, tips, and projects, click the links below to explore her socials and website.

And, to learn more about the Woman's Institute lessons and stories, watch Amy's *Vintage Made Modern* series on her [YouTube channel](#). Be sure to sign-up for her [newsletter](#) to keep up to date on Amy's creative journey and her new product releases.

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Volunteer Spotlight:

Annette Hosmann



Annette Hosmann has been quilting for about ten years, but boy, has she made those years count. Presently a member of two large quilt guilds, the Modern Quilt Guild and the Lees Summit Quilters' Guild, she herself has owned a longarm machine for a little over three years, since October 2019. In that time, she has quilted 273 quilts on it. About 200 are ones she has completed and donated to charities.

Originally from Colorado, Annette moved around. Her education landed her in Kansas City, and she worked and raised her sons here. She spent over a decade in northern Illinois and then another three-plus in Springfield, Missouri, returning to the Kansas City area a couple of years ago. The Kansas City Modern Quilt Guild contributes quilts to nonprofits, and created one with the proceeds going to The Sewing Labs. That was the way Annette found out about us. Helping at a Fabric Grab, she got to talking with Linnea, and soon began teaching quilting here. That was in 2021—during the mask-wearing time—and she is still doing it.

When she was nine, she started sewing 4-H projects. She remembers giving a presentation of seam finishes, among them French and flat-felled seams. Now retired, she focuses on her quilts. She prefers bright colors and simple, more modern designs. Her current interest is in a pattern called Tikkun, from the Hebrew "*tikkun olam*" meaning "repair the world."

Recently, Annette and her sewing studio were featured in a video on the Quilted Joy Clubhouse, with special emphasis on her thread storage and batting stand. Her advice: Use your longarm as much as you can and don't be afraid to try something new.

She also travels by way of cruises. Her trips include Panama, Hawaii, the North Sea, Australia, and the European Christmas Markets. On each cruise, she takes along fat quarters and works on piecing that's somehow related to the trip. For instance, in the North Sea (England to Russia), she used fabric from Liberty Fabrics, an English company, and in Australia, she used fabric by an Australian pattern designer. Her next trip this spring will be New Zealand to the Pacific Northwest, and she plans to experiment with English paper piecing, a method of wrapping bits of cloth around paper and handstitching the folds to form geometric shapes.

Her first grandchild is expected this summer, so Annette is now on the hunt for vintage Winnie-the-Pooh fabrics. For, of course, the baby's first quilt.

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Fabric Grab: Coming Soon!

Volunteers will soon be needed to prepare for the Fabric Grab on Saturday, April 22. This year, the event will take place from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. We'll need volunteers to pull rolls of fabric from the cubbyholes, and volunteers to help set up, work on the day of the Grab, and break down afterwards.

Sign up if you can help, and stop by for fabric bargains and freebies! There are always amazing deals at each annual Fabric Grab, and you won't want to miss this

year's.

Monthly Trivia — "Did You Know?"

The word "**nainsook**" means a fine, soft-finished cotton fabric, usually white, used until the 1920s for lingerie and infants' wear, and in the '50s and 60s to make bias tape.

Donate here



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