







Barb Adams and Alma Allen learned to sew when they were young: Barb's mom was an accomplished seamstress who taught Barb garment sewing. Her grandmother spent her days with them, sewing by hand while Barb's mom sewed for clients on her machine.

Alma also sewed clothing when she was young, learning primarily in her home economics classes. When she was 22, she took a quilting class and was hooked. Her four children provided the inspiration to continue. "When your kids are little, everything you do lasts 15 minutes," she says, citing laundry and meals as examples. "Quilting was something permanent."

Alma eventually taught guilting classes and that's where she met Barb. "She took a few classes and I told her 'Don't come back. You're ready to start designing on your own!" says Alma.

In 1999 they joined forces as Blackbird Designs, and in 2001 they started designing fabrics for Moda. To date, they've created numerous lines, some of which are based on the antique samplers that also inspire their cross stitch patterns.

Alma says their designs reflect a commitment to women's traditional art forms. Yet rather than passing quilting down, as is typical in most families, they've both passed it back up, to an older generation. Alma's grandmother completed three quilts after Alma taught her to quilt at age 75. And though Barb's mom claimed she wasn't interested in "sewing all those little pieces," today she stitches blocks for Barb to appliqué. "Appreciating a needle and thread is in my genes," says Barb.

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