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Christopherson, Kathryn Kendall (Donley) "Katy," 1921-2017 (MSS 672)

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Descriptive Inventory

MSS 672 CHRISTOPHERSON, Kathryn Kendall (Donley) “Katy,” 1921-2017

7 boxes. 62 folders. 1,416 items. 1970-2015. Originals, photocopies, photographs, slides, cassette tapes.

2008.148.1; 2010.64; 2011.52; SC2013.72

Related collection: MSS 374

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Kathryn “Katy” Christopherson, the daughter of Gerard V. “Pat” Donley (1894-1988) and Rosa Kendall Donley (1895-1970), was born on 8 July 1921 in Hiram, Ohio. A 1941 graduate of Hiram College, Katy first worked as a librarian at City Hospital of Akron, Ohio, where she met Dr. William M. Christopherson (1916-2007). They married on 24 July 1943. The Christophersons were parents of a son, George Walter Christopherson, born in 1951.

During World War II, while her husband served overseas, Katy worked in Akron, first for the War Housing Administration and then for the U.S. Navy Offices of Goodyear Aircraft. After the war, she worked at the Akron Public Library while her husband completed his residency. In 1948, Dr. Christopherson joined the Department of Pathology at the University of Louisville’s School of Medicine, and Katy became active in a number of local civic and governmental organizations. She served as Director and President of the League of Women Voters of Louisville; Director and President of the League of Women Voters of Kentucky; and Director and Vice President of the League of Women Voters of the United States. She also served as Trustee and Secretary of the League’s Education Fund, and as Director and President of the League’s Overseas Education Fund. Christopherson’s governmental assignments included Director of the Citizens Advocate Center; President of the Louisville Geriatric Center; Director of the Citizens Metropolitan Planning Council; Secretary of the Health & Welfare Council; and membership on the Governor’s Advisory Committee on Campaign Finance. She served a lengthy term as a Director of the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, where she helped to arrange President Richard Nixon’s pathbreaking diplomatic trip to China in 1972.

At the end of her involvement with the League of Women Voters, Christopherson began to delve into quilts and quilting, a skill to which she had been introduced by her grandmother and which she grew to enjoy when an illness of her husband’s kept her at home and away from her volunteer activities. She became a member of several quilting organizations, including the National Quilting Association, the American Quilt Study Group, and the American Quilter’s Society. In fall 1979, Katy helped to establish the Louisville Nimble Thimbles, a chapter of the National Quilting Association, to bring quilting activities to both children and adults. She and

several other Louisville women soon began organizing a statewide quiltmakers organization. The Kentucky Heritage Quilt Society (KHQS) was formed in 1981 and Christopherson was elected Chairman, Museum and Archive Liaison. The KHQS conducts numerous activities including quilt contests, quilting workshops, quilt shows, and an annual “Quilter’s Getaway.” Two of its major undertakings are the Quilters on File project, which conducts oral history interviews of Kentucky quiltmakers, and the Quilt Registry project, which seeks to create a comprehensive registry of vintage quilts made in Kentucky. In addition to her involvement with these organizations, Christopherson devoted time to research, teaching, consulting, curating exhibits, and writing on quilt history and quilting. In 1985, she was certified as a quilt judge by the National Quilting Association.

Katy Christopherson died in Louisville, Kentucky on 23 October 2017.

COLLECTION NOTE

This collection consists of correspondence, printed material, photographs, slides and cassette tapes related to Katy Christopherson’s involvement in quilting and quilting organizations. Much relates to her work on behalf of the Kentucky Heritage Quilt Society (KHQS) and the Louisville Nimble Thimbles. Although minor duplication may be present, her material relating to the KHQS is supplemental to the records of that organization held in WKU’s Manuscripts and Folklife Archives. A finding aid for the KHQS collection can be accessed at: https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc_mss_fin_aid/1865/. Also included are materials relating to Katy Christopherson’s consulting and curatorial work, quilt judging, and speaking and writing about quilts. A collection inventory is in Box 1, Folder 1.

Boxes 1 and 2 contain primarily correspondence relating to quilts exchanged between Christopherson and various professionals, colleagues, dealers, collectors, friends and members of the public. Included are well-known authors, collectors and historians in the quilt world such as Ricarda “Ricky” Clark, Deborah Harding, Jonathan Holstein and Meredith Schroeder. Some correspondence is written in the context of KHQS activities (shows, contests, workshops and other programming, including the Quilters on File project and initiatives to locate and exhibit historic quilts) while other correspondence pertains to Christopherson’s quilt judging, lecturing, consulting, writing, and participation in meetings and shows. Writers are sometimes difficult to identify, as many sign with their first names only. They often include details of their personal and professional lives, while Christopherson’s letters discuss milestones such as her son’s marriage in 1986; her husband’s retirement in 1987 and his gift to her of a “quilt condo” as her personal workspace; her father’s failing health and death in 1988; and her first grandchild. A 1988 letter (Box 1, Folder 10), written in advance of her attendance at a National Quilting Association show in Little Rock, Arkansas, indicates that she had an acquaintance with Governor Bill Clinton and Hillary Clinton, as does their invitation to her to attend a wedding reception in honor of a couple who later joined Clinton’s presidential administration. Also included in Box 2 are Christopherson’s articles for *The Professional Quilter* on quilt judging (Folders 10, 11) and draft articles on quilts and quilting written mainly for the publication *Back Home in Kentucky* (Folders, 12, 13).

Box 3 contains material relating chiefly to the activities of the Kentucky Heritage Quilt Society (KHQS) and the Louisville Nimble Thimbles. “When Quilt Lovers Organize,” a narrative by WKU folk studies professor Camilla A. Collins, recounts the formation and objectives of the

KHQS (Folder 1); a summary of the Quilters on File project (Folder 2) also includes Dr. Collins' discussion of interviewing procedures and techniques. Christopherson's file regarding a KHQS initiative to secure the preservation of the historic Waveland (Star of Bethlehem) Quilt (Folder 4) includes correspondence, condition and custodial records, and a color negative of a replica made by the KHQS for display. Christopherson's files on major quilt exhibits (correspondence, planning, research, data about quilts and quiltmakers, etc.) consist of: "The Political and Campaign Quilt," Frankfort, Kentucky, 1984 (Folder 5); "Scraps to Quilts," Bowling Green, Kentucky, 1986, an exhibit of quilts made from Union Underwear (Derby) fabric scraps created by a WKU folklore class (Folder 6); and "Contemporary Quilts," Louisville, Kentucky, 1987, sponsored by the Kentucky Art and Craft Foundation (Folders 7, 8). Material on the Louisville Nimble Thimbles (Folders 10-17) includes its articles of incorporation and bylaws (Folder 10); officers and members lists (Folder 11); membership information and announcements (Folder 12); correspondence (Folder 13); early financial data (Folder 14); and materials related to the judging of quilts at the Kentucky State Fair (Folder 17).

Box 4 contains images of quilts in the form of notecards and postcards, photographs and slides. The photographs and slides are not well identified, but some photographs (Folder 2) appear to show Monroe County, Kentucky quilts; others show the work of the Trigg County (Kentucky) Quilter's Guild (Folder 4).

Box 5 contains cassette tapes, most dating from the early to mid-1980s. Not all are well identified, but appear to consist of recorded interviews, workshops and other discussions related to quilters and quilting, as well as methods of quilt research and documentation. Included are several with interviews and remarks by Christopherson.

Box 6 contains copies of literature from various quilting organizations in which Christopherson was interested or involved. Much of the material consists of newsletters, but also included are correspondence, announcements and reports. Of interest is a single copy of the newsletter of the Women of Color Quilters' Network, headquartered in Cincinnati, Ohio.

SHELF LIST

BOX 1	Katy Christopherson	1981-1989	348 items
Folder 1	Inventory and biographical data		4 items
Folder 2	Correspondence	1981-1982	36 items
Folder 3	Correspondence	1983	42 items
Folder 4	Correspondence	1984	43 items
Folder 5	Correspondence	Jan. – June 1985	29 items
Folder 6	Correspondence	July - Dec. 1985	28 items

Folder 7	Correspondence	Jan. – May 1986	37 items
Folder 8	Correspondence	June - Dec. 1986	45 items
Folder 9	Correspondence	1987	43 items
Folder 10	Correspondence	1988	32 items
Folder 11	Correspondence	1989	9 items
BOX 2	Katy Christopherson	1983-2010	357 items
Folder 1	Correspondence	1990-1993	48 items
Folder 2	Correspondence	1994-2010	49 items
Folder 3	Correspondence	n.d.	58 items
Folder 4	Correspondence with Barbara Brackman	1983-1984	11 items
Folder 5	Correspondence with Nancy Halpern	1983-2006	40 items
Folder 6	Correspondence with Deborah Harding	1986-1987	27 items
Folder 7	Correspondence with Jonathan Holstein	1983-1984	13 items
Folder 8	Correspondence regarding National Quilting Association and quilt judging standards	1985-1986	14 items
Folder 9	Correspondence with Meredith Schroeder	1985-1993	42 items
Folder 10	Articles published in <i>The Professional Quilter</i>	1994-1998	15 items
Folder 11	Article drafts	n.d.	3 items
Folder 12	Article drafts, related correspondence and photos	1984-1990	9 items
Folder 13	Article drafts, related correspondence and photos	n.d.	28 items

BOX 3	Katy Christopherson	1970-2010	271 items
Folder 1	Kentucky Heritage Quilt Society – “When Quilt Lovers Organize,” by Camilla Collins	n.d.	1 item
Folder 2	Kentucky Heritage Quilt Society – Quilters on File – General information	n.d.	3 items
Folder 3	Kentucky Heritage Quilt Society – Quilters on File – Slides of interview training, Lexington and Bowling Green, Kentucky	1983	26 items
Folder 4	Kentucky Heritage Quilt Society – Waveland Quilt	1982-1987	17 items
Folder 5	Kentucky Heritage Quilt Society – “The Political and Campaign Quilt” show, Frankfort, Kentucky	1984	37 items
Folder 6	“Scraps to Quilts: Derby Fabrics, Women’s Quilts, Family Stories” exhibit at Kentucky Museum	1986	11 items
Folder 7	Kentucky Art and Craft Foundation – Contemporary Quilts exhibit – Exhibitors biographical data, photos	1986-1987	50 items
Folder 8	Kentucky Art and Craft Foundation – Contemporary Quilts exhibit – Correspondence	1986-1987	38 items
Folder 9	Miscellaneous clippings	1985-1999	5 items
Folder 10	Louisville Nimble Thimbles – Articles of incorporation and bylaws	1981-1992	3 items
Folder 11	Louisville Nimble Thimbles – Officers, members lists	1983, n.d.	3 items
Folder 12	Louisville Nimble Thimbles – Announcements, activities	1980-2010	21 items
Folder 13	Louisville Nimble Thimbles – Correspondence	1980-1987	19 items
Folder 14	Louisville Nimble Thimbles – Financial data	1981	1 item
Folder 15	Louisville Nimble Thimbles – Miscellaneous	n.d.	4 items
Folder 16	<i>The Quilt Enthusiast</i> and related correspondence	1970-1974	5 items
Folder 17	Kentucky Heritage Society and Louisville Nimble Thimbles – Quilt judging, Kentucky State Fair	1981-1985	27 items

BOX 4	Katy Christopherson	1981-1987	170 items
Folder 1	Cards and postcards with quilt and quilting images	n.d.	83 items
Folder 2	Photographs of quilts (Monroe County, Kentucky?)	1981	29 items
Folder 3	Photographs and slides of quilts	1987	4 items
Folder 4	Photographs – Trigg County Quilter’s Guild	n.d.	15 items
Folder 5	Photographs of quilts	1981	39 items
BOX 5	Katy Christopherson	1983-1986	31 items
Folder 1	Cassette tapes with various interviews of quilters, discussions about quilt documentation, etc. (list included)	1983-1986, n.d.	31 items
BOX 6	Katy Christopherson	1984-2015	149 items
Folder 1	American/International Quilt Association – Events, newsletters	1986-1993	7 items
Folder 2	American Quilt Study Group – News, seminars	1984-2013	21 items
Folder 3	American Quilt Study Group – Membership rosters, reports	1991-2013	9 items
Folder 4	American Quilter’s Society – Brochure, contests	1998-1994	3 items
Folder 5	Museum of the American Quilter’s Society – Newsletters, announcements	1991-2004	19 items
Folder 6	Canadian Quilt Study Group – Organizational correspondence, newsletters	1989-1995	16 items
Folder 7	National Quilting Association, Inc. – <i>Certified Quilt Judges Quarterly</i> ; Quilt judging materials	1992-2001	11 items
Folder 8	International Quilt Study Center & Museum – Newsletters, events, reports	2008-2012	18 items
Folder 9	Kentucky Quilt Project, Inc. – <i>The Quilt Journal</i>	1992	1 item

Folder 10	Louisville Area Fiber and Textile Artists – Newsletters	2010-2011	13 items
Folder 11	Kentucky Art and Craft Foundation, Inc. – <i>Made in Kentucky</i>	1987-1987	2 items
Folder 12	Museum of American Folk Art – Newsletters, events	1989-1992	12 items
Folder 13	Ohio Valley Quilters’ Guild – Newsletters, events	1986-1992	5 items
Folder 14	The Quilters Hall of Fame – Newsletter, events	1993-2015	11 items
Folder 15	Women of Color Quilters’ Network – Newsletter	1995	1 item
BOX 7	Katy Christopherson	1980-2010	90 items
	Restricted until 2050	1980-2010	90 items

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

MSS 672 CHRISTOPHERSON, Kathryn Kendall 1970-2015
 (Donley) “Katy,” 1921-2017

Correspondence, articles, interviews, photographs, and printed matter relating to the work of Katy Christopherson, Louisville, Kentucky, as a maker, curator, judge, lecturer and writer on quilts and quilting. Includes material relating to her involvement with the Kentucky Heritage Quilt Society and the Louisville Nimble Thimbles, Inc.

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 Avery, Virginia – Correspondence B1,F5,6,8
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 Benberry, Cuesta – Correspondence B1,F3,5,7,10; B2,F1
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