

Organizing large fundraising fairs was a popular way for women to support the anti-slavery cause. It was at one such Massachusetts fair in 1836 that organizers sold an Abolition quilt, the earliest known [fundraising quilt](http://worldquilts.quiltstudy.org/americanstory/engagement/fundraisingandcharity). The 8-pointed star crib quilt, sometimes attributed to author and activist [Lydia Maria Child](http://www.nwhm.org/education-resources/biography/biographies/lydia-maria-child/), included a poem by Quaker poet [Elizabeth Margaret Chandler](http://www.librarycompany.org/women/portraits/chandler.htm) in its center block that included a reminder to think of the slave mother, whose child “was torn from her.”

Existing quilts featuring Abolitionist sentiments are rare, although a small number of anti-slavery quilts made by Quakers are preserved in museums. Of these, several feature the [same image](http://civilwarquilts.blogspot.com/2011/02/9-birds-in-air.html), stamped in ink on a white patch, that features a bound slave, kneeling and begging for justice. The image, borrowed from Britain’s Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, became an icon of the abolitionist movement on [both sides of the Atlantic](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory/rights/abolition.htm).

As communication devices and fundraisers alike, these anti-slavery quilts were precursors to the tens of thousands of quilts made by both southern and northern women just a few short decades later, as the Civil War (1861-1865) raged.