

How to Make a Postcard Quilt

Prepared by June Calender

Size:

Approximately 4x6 inches (can vary somewhat)

Material:

Cotton, batting, embellishments

Technique:

Your favorite or anything new you want to try;

- **Whole Cloth:** Find a novelty print you like, cut out an image you want to use. Make it more interesting with a border, quilting, embellishment.
– *Or:* – draw on a quilting design that pleases you and quilt by hand or machine. Embellish if you wish.
- **Appliquéd:** Choose the background fabric and appliqué design – anything small enough to fit. Appliqué by hand if you enjoy doing that, do raw edge appliqué, fuse. Quilt around your appliqué. Ideas: miniature landscapes, flowers, broderie perse, you can add an interesting element to a printed fabric ... anything you can imagine.
- **Pieced:** Miniaturized traditional blocks, not too complicated and add an extra inch on each side. Paper piecing is most accurate at this size but if you enjoy piecing challenges this can be fun.
- **Special effects:** Print photos or other designs on fabric for laser printers and then border or embellish or quilt. Or do photo transfer with special paper for color copiers.
– *Or:* – Make designs or a small picture with crayons, paints, stamps, pastels, or any of the new special items like Angelina fibers or foil, in a design of your choosing. You can get ideas from *Quilt Art Magazine*.

In short: Just about anything goes. And the beauty of it is, if you totally hate what you've done, it's only a few inches of material, you can call it a learning experience and throw it in the wastebasket.

There are at least three books in print about making postcard quilts. They offer different techniques and ideas. There's supposed to be a website Quilted-Postcard.com but I get an "under construction" message.

How to Put a Postcard Quilt Together

Layers:

Top, batting [or you could use interfacing instead if you aren't looking for a "quilty" surface], backing. Cut all pieces at least an inch bigger than your 4x6, or whatever finished size you want to have. (Actually I use four layers: I make a quilt with top, batting and backing of muslin, then I chose a matching fabric for the message surface so none of my generally messy quilt back will show.)

After you have made the quilt front by whatever technique you want, you probably want to add a little quilting to outline your picture or add a design. Sew through the three layers in a pattern that works for you. This also adds some stiffness to the finished postcard.

Back:

Choose a plain fabric or one with a muted pattern, nothing too dark or too busy for an address and message to show.

Edges:

- **Satin stitched:** The simplest. Mark exactly where you want the stitching to be, then simply machine satin stitch and cut away the excess being very careful not to cut into your stitches.
- **Binding:** Use purchased bias binding or cut bias pieces yourself. Choose something that will add to the effect of your postcard, contrast or harmonize or add another element. Turn corners neatly. This can be entirely machine sewn or you can hand stitch the final side.
- **Pillow slip method:** Lay the message piece face on the face of your postcard. Pin carefully and mark your sewing line. Sew entirely around the postcard *except* for about 3 inches in the middle of the bottom edge. Trim all around leaving an $\frac{1}{8}$ inch, trim the corners close. Turn inside out, be sure to square up the corners. Close the open seam with invisible stitches.

Extra: If you use this method, you can still add a border if you like. Sew braid, rickrack or a couched yarn around the front of the picture if you like.

Message and Mailing

Message Side:

Iron the edges down flat then spray starch the message surface heavily. (You might want to let it dry 15 minutes before you iron again in order not to goo up your iron.) Iron smooth.

I like to draw a vertical line a little right of center to mark the address area and I write "Stamp" in the upper right corner. In the lower left, I write the name of the card and below that my name, NYC-2006. That leaves plenty of room for a message.

Mailing:

The address and message can be written with any pen, although I prefer using a fine point Sharpie or a Pigma pen.

These postcards can be sent through the mail, though an individual clerk may give you a bit of a hard time and they may insist on 39 cents, not postcard rate.

If you have done nice work, and especially if there is embellishment, it is safer to send the postcard in an envelope. Ask at the post office, or write on the envelope in red pen "Hand Cancel."

Alternative:

Just as with museum postcards, these will look very important and satisfying matted and framed. You can show them off singly or in a group of several.

Further Inspiration:

Most of the quilt magazines have had articles on postcard quilts during the past year or two. Some organizations are selling donated postcard quilts and making a nice little profit. We could do that at our show next March. It's a relatively inexpensive purchase for visitors and a very appropriate reminder of what they enjoyed at the show.

Important: *Let your imagination take over and have fun.*