Quilt tales: Cloth that traveled the Oregon Trail

Stories by women who made the Oregon Trail trek are on display along with the quilts they made or brought with them.

"Snail's Trail" is the work of Mary Zeralda Carpenter Bones Stone, who came over the trail in 1853 and settled in Polk County. Several of her own offspring died, but she took in 11 motherless children over the years. The red-and-off-white quilt features an off-kilter geometric design that looks surprisingly modern.

A one-of-a-kind exhibit is the "Oregon Pioneer Ribbon Quilt" made by trail survivor Elizabeth Ann Clark Kelly in 1925. It's pieced from commemorative ribbons given to settlers who attended Oregon Pioneer Association gatherings.

The quilt is on loan from the American Folk Art Museum in New York. This is the first time it's been publicly displayed in Oregon, according to Booth.

The show was assembled by Mary Bywater Cross, a respected quilt historian. The quilts come from the heritage center's collection, as well as the Oregon Historical Society and other sources.

"They transcend their purpose as quilts and become family heirlooms," Booth said.

And so, in a sense, do the stories that accompany them.