Appliqué Coverlets and Curtains

Coverlets were made by the project for WPA nursery schools and at the request of Milwaukee County to improve the environment at the Children’s Home. The project created a line of appliqué curtains to add color and privacy to the children’s ward at County Hospital.

Appliqués were initially made entirely by hand. Later, workers were trained to use close machine stitching which was more durable.
A state order to furnish coverlets to all of the WPA nurseries in Wisconsin created work for 75 women.
An order for 600 coverlets transformed the dormitories of the Milwaukee County Home for Dependent Children.
The work involved hand and machine stitching. Workers who became comfortable using sewing machines were encouraged to transfer to the WPA women’s sewing project, which paid higher wages.
Julia Loomis (Knudson) designed the “Cherry Tree” curtains used in the recreation room at the Milwaukee Home for Dependent Children.
Sample appliqué curtain designs from the project ordering catalog
Appliqué curtain material was available for $1.10 for the first two yards, plus 30 cents for each additional yard.
See Mary Kellogg Rice, *Useful Work for Unskilled Women: A Unique Milwaukee WPA Project* (Milwaukee County Historical Society, 2003) for references and photo credits.