

West Virginia Quilt Trails

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Nationally recognized, Wayne County 4-H Heritage Quilt Trail illustrates the versatility and potential to commemorate West Virginia's history and cultural characteristics and differences through efforts of community members.

West Virginia boasts nine quilt trails that serve to beautify rural and urban areas throughout the state. The Wayne County 4-H Ambassadors team started a 4-H Heritage Quilt Trail in 2013, as a community service project aimed to beautify a county they dearly love.

Definition of a Barn Quilt Trail

A barn quilt trail is a number of barn quilt locations to which people can travel in succession from one quilt block to another. The barn quilts that make up the trails can vary greatly, though traditional sizes are either 4 feet by 4 feet or 8 feet by 8 feet. Individual barn quilts are essentially wooden squares with a quilt block pattern painted



on top. Quilt patterns vary from simple designs to more complicated ones, and it is the color choice that really makes a quilt come alive. Quilts may be hung on barns or buildings. Quilt trails are known to celebrate the unique cultural elements of an area and serve to preserve barns and other unique buildings that have historical significance to a county or city.

History of the American Quilt Trail Movement

The creation of barn quilt trails is currently the largest public arts movement in our country. The first quilt trail was started by Donna Sue Groves, who was originally from West Virginia but moved to Adams County, Ohio. It all started with Donna's promise to her mother that she would paint a quilt square on an ugly tobacco barn on the property they shared. Donna's primary goal was to preserve the stories behind those who built the barns and the family farm using quilts. Donna's love for this project ultimately resulted in her co-authoring a book with Suzi Parron titled, *Barn Quilts and the American Quilt Trail Movement* that is an essential read for anyone interested in the history of quilt trails. Through Donna's initial effort, barn quilts are now found in more than 30 states, as well as Canada.

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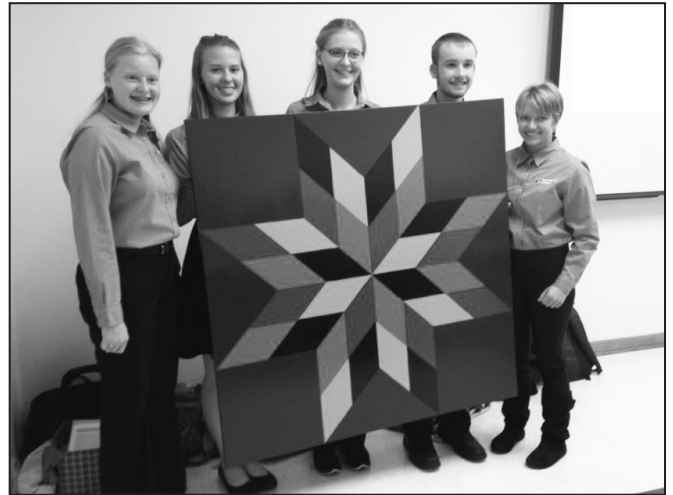
With Ohio as our neighbor, it is no surprise that quilt trails are found throughout West Virginia. Currently, there are ten counties with quilt trails: Clay, Doddridge, Hampshire, Lincoln, Roane, Monroe, Pocahontas, Mason, Putnam and Wayne. Each quilt trail is unique in a variety of ways. Quilt trails in Mason, Monroe and Pocahontas counties each have historical significance. Quilt trails vary also in size and barn quilt placements: Monroe has more than 60 quilts in trail, Roane has 37 and Wayne has 25 and counting. The quilt trail in Old Central City features quilt blocks placed on buildings in Huntington in Cabell County instead of barns. Finally, the Wayne County 4-H Heritage Quilt began as a community service project and is led by a team of 4-H members.



How to Develop a Quilt Trail

Developing a quilt trail requires time and research. The book mentioned above is a great resource for anyone interested in starting a quilt trail. Several points to consider when starting a quilt trail include funding, marketing, quilt patterns (traditional or custom designs) and the application to join the trail.

The first step in constructing a quilt involves cutting three of the 2-by-4s with 45 degree angles for the sides and top of the frame. Next, cut two 2-by-4s for the mid and lower cross supports. Use a Kreg Jig® to drill the holes in the frame pieces. It is important to secure the frame pieces using 2½-inch Kreg Blue-Kote™ screws.



Next, sand the frame and prepare it for the face of the block. Cut the plywood (if making a 4-by-4 block) and glue and screw it onto the 2-by-4 frame. Sand the block and fill the holes with wood filler. Let the filler dry and sand the block smooth.

Finally, apply a base coat to your block (preferably two coats of Kilz® primer and three coats of Valspar® exterior gloss paint for the background color). Mark off your pattern using a pencil and fill in with the colors of your choice.

Club Activities

Group activities are an easy way to explore quilt trails. A trip to one of the nine quilt trails in West Virginia is one idea.

If this idea is not feasible, members could share their favorite quilt block or a favorite quilt they made or received from someone.

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