



About the Barn Quilt Project

Quilts, always a beloved symbol of comfort, family, heritage, and community, not only provide cover and warmth. They also provide new splashes of color along the roadsides and into the rural countryside of many communities. Vibrant quilt patterns painted on pre-built eight foot wooden squares have been installed on barns, public buildings, shops, and other appropriate buildings. Self-guided trails maps direct sight-seers along the highways and byways to view these icons of tradition in their new and significant role as public art.

The **Watauga County Arts Council** launched its own version of the Quilt Trails Project in 2007. The project was undertaken with the encouragement and support of **Handmade in America**, which had previously sponsored similar projects in Madison, Yancey, Mitchell, and Ashe counties. With grant funds from the **Blue Ridge National Heritage Area**, Handmade in America sought to link these counties by sponsoring trails in Watauga and Avery counties. The grant funding provided funding for the first several quilts. In Watauga County, **Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation** also agreed to sponsor the project by assisting with “hanging” the quilt squares on the barns. Discounts on painting supplies were also given to the project by **Boone Paint and Interiors**.

Often referred to as Barn Quilts (because the concept originated with barns in Midwestern states and still focuses primarily on barns despite the more recent inclusion of other hanging sites), each quilt square requires a team of volunteer painters and a willing property owner to donate hanging space on their building. Making a quilt square together allows volunteer groups from community centers, churches, school classes, and even families the opportunity to create and paint their own quilt square as a group project. The square which is chosen may represent a family pattern from a beloved quilt or perhaps something new. Taking part in the Barn Quilt Project allows individuals, community centers, churches, school classes, and other groups to create and paint their own personal quilt square.

The Barn Quilts are installed on barns, public buildings, shops, and other appropriate buildings around the community. A self-guided trails map directs sight-seers along the highways and byways to view these icons of tradition in their new and significant role as public art. The **Watauga County Barn Quilt Trail Map** can

be downloaded at <http://www.watauga-arts.org/pages/barn.html> or a printed copy can be obtained by visiting **the Jones House Community Center** in downtown Boone.

The Arts Council is happy to advise individuals or groups if they desire to create their own Barn Quilt. The completed Barn Quilts may then be submitted for inclusion on the Watauga Barn Quilt Trail. We ask that all sites make a commitment for the Barn Quilt to remain in place for at least two years. These quilt squares are a wonderful way to celebrate our local heritage, as well as a unique regional art project that crosses county lines.

For more information, contact the Watauga County Arts Council at wcac@watauga-arts.org or call 828-264-1789.



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