

Heart of the Hills Quilters 2026 Quilt Show Challenge

Introduction:

2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America, to honor that occasion I have put together a quilt challenge inspired by the spirit of the United States, and what it means to be an American.

Quilting and American history have an entwined existence. Quilts tell stories and the story of America has long been told through quilting. Quilting was born out of practicality and has evolved into an art form with practical roots that can be seen in many cultures in America. The following is an abridged version of the history of quilting as it coincides with the history of the United States.

The Challenge:

Create a quilt no larger than 50" x 65" (throw) in the spirit of what it means to you to be an American, or a quilt inspired by a time or event in American history that you are inspired by or interested in. This can be, but is not limited to, the use of a historical pattern, reproduction fabric, or a unique design that embodies the spirit of America and what it means to be an American. Please, include a short summary of how your piece fits the challenge.

For questions, please feel free to reach out:

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Timeline of American History (abridged) with examples of quilting styles

- **Pre Revolutionary War (Prior to 1775)**
 - Quilts were necessary items often made from whole cloth, or pieced using scraps of material from clothing or other cloth items, pre invention of the sewing machine, hand pieced, and hand quilted
 - Notable Styles:
 - Wool whole cloth
 - Chintz Applique

- **Revolutionary War (1775 to 1783)**
 - Not unlike the pre-revolutionary war quilts, quilting was a necessity and done by hand often out of whole cloth and repurposed scraps of fabric from clothes and other household fabric.
 - Notable Quilts and Patterns
 - Broderie Perse
 - Copp Family Indigo Wool Quilt

- **Early Republic and Expansion (1784 – 1860)**
 - A closer look at quilting in African American culture, slave women were often tasked quilt making for masters/mistresses. Enslaved women were resourceful, saving scraps of fabric to create quilts for personal use.
 - Patterns credited to this era
 - Sawtooth
 - Drunkard's path

- Railroad crossing
- Tree of Paradise
- Ocean Wave
- Feathered Star
- Nine Patch
- Medallion style quilts

Invention of the cotton gin 1794

- **Civil War (1861-1865)**
 - Quilts and the underground railroad
 - There is mixed evidence that quilts were used specifically by enslaved people utilizing the underground railroad. Quilts are heavy, opportunity to escape enslavement was often a spur of the moment act and many personal belongings were left behind. However, there is evidence that symbols on quilts and barn quilts were used to signal safe houses, places to sleep, where food could be had, and other important information to both enslaved people and union and confederate soldiers.
 - Notable quilts and patterns
 - Jane Stickle Quilt 1863
 - Log Cabin
 - The evening star
 - Washington pavement
 - Hummingbird

Invention and wide distribution of the modern(ish) sewing machine 1870s

- **Colonial Revival approx. 1880-1940**
 - An era in which quilts were inspired by the past as a way to mitigate the effects of rapid modernization and devastation of a post-civil war America.
 - Notable quilts and patterns
 - Schoolhouse
 - Crazy Quilts
 - **Removal Era, Reservation Era 1830 – 1880 and beyond**
 - Western patchwork influences the needle work of many Indigenous nations, quilts for necessity and artistic release start to emerge in Indigenous culture.
 - Notable quilts and patterns
 - 8-pointed star
 - **Contemporary Quilting 1940- present**
 - As fabric and sewing technology advanced quilters artistic expression took off like never before.
- **Here are some resources to sites and books that contain more detailed information to inspire you:**
 - Declaration of Independence:
 - <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>
 - Constitution:
 - <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution>
 - Bill of Rights:

- <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights>

- Articles

- <https://www.worldbeatcenter.org/quilt-codes-of-the-underground-railroad-hidden-messages-on-the-road-to-freedom/#:~:text=Decoding%20the%20Patterns:%20Quilt%20Blocks,travelers%20to%20follow%20nature's%20guide.>
- <https://www.internationalquiltmuseum.org/exhibition/american-quilts-modern-age>
- <https://americanindian.si.edu/sites/1/files/pdf/education/quilts.pdf>
- <https://teresaduryeawong.com/2021/02/08/native-american-indian-quilts-150-years-of-sewing-and-survival/?v=28886f13f578>
- https://www.si.edu/object/1750-1800-copp-family-indigo-wool-quilt:nmah_556287
- https://stitchinheaven.com/blogs/howdy/a-trip-through-quilting-history-antique-american-quilt-patterns?srsId=AfmBOoq43LjDQu_T4lpVAaTuc8CvBS1A97viZ5tMlnwBLRgxMDMtNh2p
- https://www.quiltingdaily.com/free-civil-war-era-quilt-patterns-ebook-fons-porter/?srsId=AfmBOoohztlIieZbsEwS9g7zQS5zdiBtyh0cxCNsah3UPs427oqve_pb
- <https://blog.fabrics-store.com/2020/10/20/power-and-purpose-the-history-of-african-american-quilting/>
- https://worldquilts.quiltstudy.org/americanstory/quiltsare/colonialquilter_s
- <https://americanhistory.si.edu/ar/collections/object-groups/national-quilt-collection?page=3>
- <https://millmuseum.org/history-2/din-of-machines/sewing-revolution/>
- <https://aaqc-durham.com/>

- <https://aaregistry.org/story/black-history-and-quilting-a-brief-story/>
- <https://www.internationalquiltmuseum.org/exhibition/perfecting-past-colonial-revival-quilts>
- <https://quiltingjetgirl.com/2015/03/07/history-of-quilting-civil-war-era/>
- <https://waynedalenews.com/2015/07/quilts-of-the-american-revolution-war-era-around-the-frame/>
- <https://news.northwestern.edu/stories/2023/02/tracy-vaughn-manley-quilting-american-culture>
- <https://thequiltersranch.com/blog/a-brief-history-of-quilts-in-america-piecing-together-the-past>

○ Books:

- The Farmer's Wife Sampler Quilt; Laurie Aaron Hird
- Facts & Fabrications Unraveling the History of Quilts & Slavery; Barbara Brackman