

Quilting in North Carolina ^[1]

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Quilting in North Carolina

By Diana Bell-Kite, [North Carolina Museum of History](#) ^[2], 2015

See also: [North Carolina Quilts for K-8 Students](#) ^[3]

Introduction: Quilting Comes to North Carolina

The history of quiltmaking in North Carolina spans four centuries and has been shaped by Tar Heels of nearly every ethnic group and social class. At its simplest, quilting involves stitching or tying a layer of batting between two pieces of fabric. But makers' differing resources, styles, and intentions have resulted in a vast diversity of expressions over the course of North Carolina's history. Upper-class European settlers initially brought quiltmaking to the American colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Imported fabric cost dearly, and only women of means could afford the large pieces of silk and chintz used to create popular styles. Rather, most families used blankets or coverlets for warmth. Relative to other colonies, North Carolina did not develop a particularly rich quilting tradition during this early period. The region's challenging geography slowed in-migration and did little to foster the growth of a large moneyed class. Even after statehood and through the antebellum period, the tenuous infrastructure, poor transportation, and overwhelming ruralness that contributed to North Carolina's reputation as the "[Rip Van Winkle State](#)" ^[4] also resulted in the creation of fewer quilts of exceptional artistry than in other parts of the young nation. Further, the South's humid climate and abundant pests limited the survival rates of early textiles from that region, leaving scholars fewer examples to study and analyze.



18th Century-Antebellum

^[5]



Civil War & Postwar Era

^[6]



1880s-1920s

[7]



Great Depression

[8]



20th Century & Revival

[9]



21st Century & Beyond

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[Quilting Part I: 18th Century to Antebellum Era](#)^[5]

[Quilting Part II: Civil War & Postwar Era](#)^[6]

[Quilting Part III: 1880s to 1920s](#)^[7]

[Quilting Part IV: Great Depression](#)^[8]

[Quilting Part V: 20th Century & 1970s Revival](#)^[9]

[Quilting Part VI: 21st Century & Beyond](#)^[10]

North Carolina Quilts Audio Tour

The North Carolina Museum of History has recorded audio tours of a number of the quilts that are included with this article series. [Visit this link to find and listen to the playlist.](#)^[11]

Examples of quilts from the Collections of the North Carolina Museum of History.



Quilt made from flannel tobacco inserts from the American Tobacco Company (foreign flags and Indian blankets). Durham County, North Carolina, 1915. Collection of the North Carolina Museum of History, April 2015.

Keep reading >>[Quilting Part I: 18th Century to Antebellum Era](#)^[5]  ^[12]

Educator Resources:

Grades K-8: <https://www.ncpedia.org/north-carolina-quilts-k-8> ^[3]

Grade 8: Creating a Civil Rights Quilt. North Carolina Civic Education Consortium. <https://k12database.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2012/04/CivilRig...> ^[13]

References:

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Roberson, Ruth Haislip, ed. *North Carolina Quilts*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.

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Shaw, Robert. *American Quilts: The Democratic Art*. Updated Edition. New York: Sterling, 2014.

Additional Resources:

History of the North Carolina Quilt Project, the Quilt Index. <http://www.quiltindex.org/contributor.php?kid=4B-BF-0> ^[15]

(accessed March 24, 2015).

Lesson Plans, the Quilt Index. <http://www.quiltindex.org/lessonplans.php> ^[16] (accessed March 24, 2015).

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Love to Sew Studio. "Extra wide double fold bias tape being sewn as a binding for a decorative quilt." Photograph. Wikimedia Commons. Used under Creative Commons License CC BY-SA 3.0. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quilting> ^[17] (accessed March 24, 2014).

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[13] <https://k12database.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2012/04/CivilRightsQuilt.pdf>

[14] <http://www.quiltindex.org/fulldisplay.php?kid=1-6-2EC>

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