

# DIY QUILT BLOCK

From the Quilt Trail of Northeast Tennessee

The Quilt Trail hails from Donna Sue Groves of Ohio, who painted the first quilt block on her mother's barn; it was so loved that it grew into a local arts and tourism initiative, that then spread to other states and countries. The first quilt block in upper Northeast Tennessee was spearheaded by Roy Settle supported by many quilt makers and farm owners. Our trail now has over 130 locations on barns and in downtowns. In 2020, the ARC&D stopped overseeing the creation of more quilt trail sites, but we keep the website and stories alive at [www.quilttrail.org](http://www.quilttrail.org) and at [youtube.com/@NETNQuiltTrail](https://youtube.com/@NETNQuiltTrail), and we encourage you to make your own quilt blocks as a way to connect with history, creativity and the beauty of the place that you call home.

## Design

1

The NE TN quilt trail is **always hand painted and always tells a story**. The majority of quilt blocks are paying homage to a real hand sewn quilt, and the story of the hands who made it. When there hasn't been a family quilt, a traditional quilt pattern is selected, or sometimes a pattern is newly created, from symbolism that ties together the place and people involved.

## Board

2

We sourced board materials exclusively from Mumpower Signs in Bristol VA. The first squares used MDO plywood, called marine grade plywood, and built a wooden frame to hang these on their location. Most recently in the 2000's we switched with Mumpower to using **aluminum sheeting** primed with white, which came in 4-foot boards, or 5-foot boards. Aluminum sheeting is also very light weight and easy to hang with screws. The boards determined that most quilt blocks on the Trail are 4-foot square, or 5-foot square.

## Paint

3

Prime boards with exterior latex retail store primer, two coats and dry according to directions. For the design, **retail latex exterior paint** has worked great for us, such as Lower, PPG, Sherwin Williams, etc. Buy colors in the quart size, if possible. In the first decade we used oil-based sign paint, but we came to see that we could use latex paint, which has many advantages: more colors, low VOC, cost-effective and available at more places. It is color fast (so far!) The more colors you use in your design, the higher your cost.

## Do it!

4

(1) **Layout with pencil** using a carpenter square, yard sticks or compass, as appropriate for the design. (2) Use **paint tape** to block off color sections at a time for a straight clean edge. Allow to fully dry, or use a low-heat hair dryer, to dry fully before taking the tape off. (3) **Paint** with a nice grade brush, the size appropriate to the pattern.

