

Let's talk about it.

-Sally Caldwell

The Patchwork of a County

Specifically designed, painstakingly stitched, and frequently overlooked, quilts are more than just the old cozy blanket thrown across an easy chair that provides warmth in the cold winter months. Here in McCormick, South Carolina, quilts are inspiration for art, memory, and

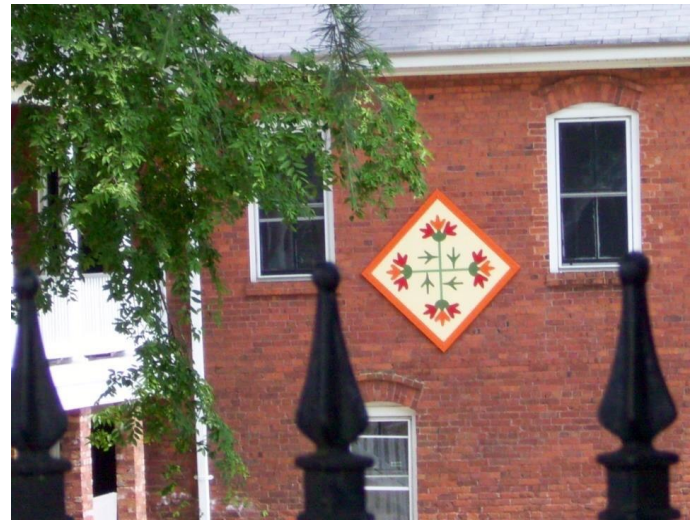


Shaaron Kohl, owner at the Red Rooster Emporium and coordinator for the McCormick Quilt Tour, displays a quilt panel, a piece of artwork in progress at the shop.

tourism. When the McCormick County Quilt Trail formed in 2011, America was already booming with quilt tours. The idea for a quilt tour sprung up in Ohio when Amish folk first put the squares on the front of their barns. Now, almost every single state in the US features a Quilt Tour. Many even contain more than one. Each quilt tour is specific to its own county. The

McCormick County trail covers the whole area of McCormick County and visitors may begin and end wherever they choose. The trail is available for viewing all day every day.

A quilt tour consists of travelling, history, and art. These hand-painted panels are replicas of specific squares from significant quilts. Quilt panel #1 in McCormick tour, featured on the McCormick Arts Council at the Keturah (MACK) building, is a square that was inspired by a quilter named Sallie White, a woman who lived in Plum Branch and started her quilt in 1904. Just as this panel has a story behind it, each quilt panel is rich with history and significance, whether to a single family member or to an entire town.



A panel located on the McCormick Arts Council at the Keturah building, this Indian Paintbrush quilt pane is sponsored by Savannah Lakes Village Quilt Group in honor and memory of Linda Marx, a MACK volunteer who was a very skilled quilt maker.

The first quilt panel ever painted for McCormick County is featured on the front of the MACK building. The beautiful design and bright colors make the building stand out and often draws a crowd. Not only does this panel express family history, it enhances viewer's enjoyment of

the environment. The McCormick County towns that feature quilt panels include Plum Branch, McCormick, Willington, and Parksville. All 14 quilt panels in McCormick County have been crafted in the Red Rooster Emporium, a charming antique and art shop that has a little bit of everything.

In order to make a quilt panel, one must bring in the original square or a picture of the square and a group of volunteers will design and create the quilt panel. Volunteers first prep the panel so the measurements are all exact and then they help choose the colors. The Red Rooster uses only the best quality paints available for these works of art. Once the paint is dry, the panel is primed with a high-quality, weather-resistant sealer that keeps the colors bright and the patterns distinct. Shaaron Kohl and her team work hard to make the colors vibrant and the size complimentary to the design. The bigger, the better! Prices for making a quilt panel depend of the desired size, ranging from 2' x 2' to 8' x 8'. Cost includes any and all materials needed to make the panel, even the volunteers! Anyone is welcome to the shop to come see this process of making a quilt panel.



A beautiful quilt panel pops with color on the old Cotton Gin building in McCormick.

The McCormick County Quilt trail itself begins and ends wherever and whenever you decide! The locations include the Cotton Gin building, Willington History Center, and the McCormick County Library. These squares contribute to the community and often evoke an emotional response. They are also just plain pretty to look at!

These are just a few of the warm, colorful examples that are displayed by this tour.

Many of these quilt panels are double sided as well and hung rather than mounted. Janice Grizzard constructed one quilt panel that featured two squares of quilt that were made from each of her grandmothers. As Shaaron stated about the quilt tours, "It's an intersection of history, art, community, culture, and pride."



A vibrant panel representing a quilt made by Sarah White, on display on the front of the McCormick Arts Council at the Keturah.

Total, there are 14 quilt panels around McCormick County, each with its own story to tell. As each quilt contains unique, beautiful patterns, so does McCormick County contain many different lives that have left their mark upon society. Whether emotional or educational; historical or just for fun, these quilt panels contribute to the culture in McCormick and add a touch of beauty and vivacity wherever they are placed. Art is most beautiful when significant, and these quilt panels certainly accomplish this. So, whether you are in town visiting family, camping out at Hickory Knob State Park, or visiting the charming Red Rooster Emporium, the colorful panels on this town's old buildings will certainly draw not only your eye but also your heart.