

Press Release

America 250: Watauga County Commemorative Quilt

The Friends of Watauga County Public Library received a grant from America 250 NC, a program of the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources to celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the beginning of the United States. The purpose of the project is to commemorate the history, strength, and courage of the people of Watauga County during those historic times. A quilt illustrating the themes, *A Gathering of Voices* and *Visions of Freedom*, was selected to honor the nation's semiquincentennial.



Library volunteer and retired ASU professor Donna Breitenstein wrote the grant and imagined its design. "The purpose is to illustrate the history and culture of Watauga County before, during, and after the American Revolution. The quilt is 13.5' feet long and is an incredibly beautiful museum-quality piece of art created by Watauga County quilters."

The nine sections include a Cherokee hunting camp representing indigenous people, early frontiersmen featuring Daniel Boone, the Proclamation of 1763 (one of the "Intolerable Acts"), the march of the Overmountain Men and Battle of Kings Mountain, scientific exploration by botanists, the role of women, the establishment of churches, settlements that became today's communities, and modern Watauga County.

"Quilts tell stories; they illustrate history; they express love and sorrow; they are community; people gather to make them and experience them; they are art; they teach."

Patty Blanton, master quilter and instructor at Sew Original, identified talented quilters from the Mountain Laurel Quilt Guild to join her in creating the project. Susan Payne was selected to illustrate a first draft and sewed the quilt along with Sue Corcoran, Irina Robinson, and Susan Sweet, who shared that the project has been a "labor of love." The border of the quilt will show images of flora and fauna of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Sew Original has provided a meeting space and discounted materials to the quilters.

An unveiling ceremony with refreshments will be held Saturday, July 26, 2025, in the Meeting Room of Watauga County Public Library. The quilt may be viewed between 1:00 and 4:00 p.m. with a program beginning at 2:00 p.m. The quilt will go "on tour" in the fall visiting Watauga County Schools, civic groups, historical societies, and the Western Branch of Watauga County Library. Its permanent home will be in the Adult Services area of the Watauga County Public Library. Dr. Breitenstein, along with researchers Anita Clemmer, Mary Daly, Will Stein, and Sharon Breitenstein have created print materials and lesson plans about the quilt, which will be available to the public.

Watauga County Librarian, Monica Caruso, stated, "We are so excited about the America 250 NC grant, and I wish to thank Donna, the quilters, our researchers, and Watauga County Schools for all their hard work and partnership. This will be a natural long-term addition to the library so that we can showcase the quilt and local history."