

Devotion to Quilting

The Amish are well known for their spiritual devotion, work ethic and easy lifestyle. Yet while many may imagine the Amish to be a straight-laced folk, the "simple folk" are observed for their bright-coloured and boldly-designed quilts. The custom of American Amish quilt making is thought to possess originated in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania (one of the greatest and earliest Amish settlements in America) as early as 1890. It was here that disciplined craftsmanship, spiritual commitment, and simplicity combined to make practical works of art that continue to inspire people everywhere. In reality, quilt making has been a leading section of Amish life, as noted by the conventional poetry:

"At your quilting, maids, do not tarry.

Quilt fast in the event you'd wed.

A maid who quilts at twenty-one,

Never shall greet her bridal sunlight."



While Amish quilt layouts have been typically duplicated, few possess the careful attention to detail and wonderful natural materials which make conventional [Amish quilts](#) so popular.

The three classic Amish quilt layouts are Sun and Shadows, Diamond in Square and Bars. Based on the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Sun and Shadow quilt is the most famous layout. It's noticed for concentric rings of light and dark-colored diamonds which grow outward to form a hypnotic design. According to Sue Bender, author of "Plain and Simple," "The Amish adore the Sunlight and Shadow quilt pattern. It reveals two sides--the dark and light, spirit and form--along with the challenge of bringing the two into a bigger unity. It is not a choice between two extremes: conformity and independence, discipline or imagination, validation or uncertainty, humility or a raging egotism. It is a balancing act which includes opposites."

The Diamond in Square and Tavern layouts were maybe the first Amish designs and were considered to have been loosely inspired by traditional "English" quilt layouts. Yet, these designs commonly feature hand-stitching (frequently done at communities quilting bees) and handspun stuff featuring natural dyes. Lately, Amish communities have chosen the classic quilt designs a step further by creating "quilt gardens," named for the plots of brilliantly colored flowers carefully arranged to resemble quilt patterns. These quilt gardens have turned into a favorite draw in the Midwest, where Elkhart County in Northern Indiana features an annual Quilt Garden Tour through 19 gardens and featuring over 100,000 flowers. Seeing decks and informational plaques make the encounter a dazzling one for hundreds of yearly visitors.

Now, [Amish quilts](#) can be seen in museums and in the dwellings of quilt-fans throughout the USA. Yet, several Amish are still creating new quilts using conventional layouts and old world quilting systems. Most of the more significant Amish communities on the East Coast and in the Midwest characteristic quilts for sale, in addition to quilt gardens.