

11-1-2022

Georgia Library Spotlight: Azalea Regional Library System's Underground Railroad Quilt

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Recommended Citation

Pearson, A. (2022). Georgia Library Spotlight: Azalea Regional Library System's Underground Railroad Quilt. *Georgia Library Quarterly*, 59(4). Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq/vol59/iss4/4>

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Azalea Regional Library System's Underground Railroad Quilt

A unique piece of history has been added to Greene County Library in the form of a replica of an Underground Railroad quilt. Underground Railroad quilts were used to communicate information to enslaved people about how to escape lives of exploitation and servitude. These quilts were used by those who supported the efforts of enslaved people, communicating messages or places of safety to those who fled to the North. Although the validity of these quilts has been questioned, there are stories from the descendants of enslaved people that claim that the stories of the quilts are true, and their ancestors escaped to their freedom through the silent, coded messages of the quilts and traditional songs laced with directions, warnings, and signs.

The quilt depicts the different patterns used in actual Underground Railroad quilts to spell out codes for enslaved people to use during their journey to freedom. The patterns found on the quilt were taken from the book, *Underground Railroad Sampler (Quilt in a Day Series)* by Eleanor Bur. This book was inspired by the novel, *Hidden in Plain View: A Secret Story of Quilts and the Underground Railroad* by Jacqueline L. Tobin and Raymond G. Dobard.

Greene County Library's manager, Lonya Jackson-Sarden, had this to say about the importance of the addition of the quilt to the library's walls:

I am excited about the Underground quilt replica being here at the Greene County Library for a couple of reasons. First of all, it provides an opportunity for our patrons to learn more about slavery that they might not have knowledge of, and second of all, because the Quilt Guild of the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Greensboro,



made and donated the quilt, letting others know that Black history lives on.

Abrielle Boatfield, a staff member, states that the quilt is “a beautiful symbol of victory” and that the manager and staff “are honored to have this quilt on display for those in the community who visit regularly to appreciate this wonderful work of art.”

The quilt, which was added to the library as a part of Greene’s 2022 African American History Month display, will continue to hang on display for the library’s patrons and community to view.

To learn more about the Azalea Regional Library System, please visit <https://azalealibraries.org/>.

*Ashley Pearson is member services librarian at
Azalea Regional Library System*