

Quilt: #219 Drunken Saylor

Quilter: Ida Nelson Turner

Sponsor: Diann Simms

Experienced quilters will recognize Ida Bell Nelson Turner's lovely, complex quilt as an example of the Drunkard's Path pattern. This is one of the more challenging quilt blocks to construct because of its curved piecing and complicated block layout. Ida's quilt is distinguished by its intricate arrangement of blocks and its balanced placement of color. Its block layout is more complicated than other common arrangements. Its bright early 20th century fabrics make this Drunkard's Path an especially cheerful quilt.

Ida Bell Nelson Turner likely made this quilt sometime after 1920 while living with her husband, Newman Sebastian Turner, in Pike County, Alabama. She lived in close proximity to her many relatives and friends who joined with her to complete quilts for each other. Ida's granddaughter Diann Simms—the owner of this quilt and sponsor of this block—says Ida told her she used to “put the pieces together” and then family and friends would gather and quilt. According to Ida, not everyone in the group got a completed quilt each year. They “took turn about.” While Ida's quilt is admired for its beauty and craftsmanship today, its original purpose was covering beds and keeping warm. Like many quilts of the early 20th century, this quilt is backed with bright yellow fabric. The quilt top has a border of blue and bright yellow.

The Drunkard's Path's zigzag pattern of curved pieces resembles the path a drunk might walk after a night of drinking. Some quilt historians note that the Drunkard's Path pattern was popular among quilters during the nation's experiment with Prohibition. These historians believe that women who supported the temperance movement may have used this pattern to express their support of the anti-alcohol cause. There is, however, some disagreement among quilt historians about the theory's validity. Ida's granddaughter Diann doubts that her grandmother made this quilt as a political statement but thinks she'd have found its name, Drunkard's Path, funny since Ida abstained from alcohol all her life.

Ida Nelson was born in 1880 and died in 1966. She is buried near Shelhorn, Alabama.

This quilt block is located at 66 Oleander Drive, Anderson, SC.

