

Basic Detail Report



Quilt

Date

c. 1840

Medium

Cotton

Description

Large "Star of Bethlehem" pattern quilt made between 1830-1850 by an unknown American quilter. The history of quilt-making in what would become the United States dates to the earliest European immigrants, but it was during the pioneer era—with families moving out west with only what they could carry and often only having scraps over full swaths of cloth—that quilting entered a

renaissance. The star pattern was the most prevalent pattern employed by these early quilters, often serving as a metaphor of sorts for a guiding star safely leading travelers to their destination. The "Star of Bethlehem" is one of the hundreds of designs which included the astral motif, and one where it is most prominently displayed. The design was originally called the "Mathematical Star" when it was first used in Baltimore in the early 19th century. Over time it took many names such as "Lone Star" in Texas in the 1840s and different variants also had unique names such as the "Blazing Star" or "Feathered Star" pattern. This quilt incorporates an exceptional collection of expensive materials. Repeating green triangles, called a "Dogtooth" pattern, border the quilt and visually emphasize the four corners which contain images of lush trees and exotic birds. Cut from printed chintz fabric, these additional motifs were skillfully appliquéd to the quilt top to add further embellishment. The quilt was made for a bed that would have been raised high above the floor to avoid cold drafts.

Dimensions

100 × 100 in. (254 × 254 cm)