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The Life and Quilts of Ida Stover Eisenhower

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Ida Elizabeth Stover Eisenhower (1862–1946), mother of Dwight D. Eisenhower, the thirty-fourth president of the United States, made quilts while an orphan in Virginia; a young transient in Hope, Kansas, and Denison, Texas; and a struggling housewife with six robust boys living on the “wrong side” of the tracks in Abilene, Kansas. Twenty-three quilts and five quilted pillow tops have survived the many years of use by the Eisenhower family. Original research at the Eisenhower Center in Abilene, Kansas, and the Ida Eisenhower birthplace near Mount Sidney, Virginia, and an extensive literature search support the conclusion that Ida developed a quilting style of her own that included elements of improvisation, asymmetry, and multiple-patterning. Ida found making quilts a creative and pleasurable diversion from her challenging daily life.

Although no one knows how many quilted pieces Ida Stover Eisenhower, mother of the thirty-fourth president of the United States, made during her lifetime, twenty-seven quilts, tops, and pillows are housed at the Eisenhower Center in Abilene, Kansas, and one quilt is kept at the Dwight D. Eisenhower birthplace in Denison, Texas (see appendix). These quilts represent all of the periods of Ida's life from 1862 until 1946: her years as a young girl in Virginia; as a college girl and young housewife in Lecompton and Hope, Kansas; as a transient young mother in Denison, Texas; and as a homemaker in Abilene, Kansas.

Ida considered sewing a reward for carefully managing the many chores incumbent in raising a large family on the developing prairie.

rie. During an extended interview recorded in 1943, Ida Eisenhower indicated that after all of the mending, darning, and clothing manufacture—and of course, daily cooking and weekly laundry and cleaning were out of the way—only then, had she “earned a right to do fancywork!”¹ Ida talked about making quilts—“the common kind, made from squares of wool from cast-off clothing, and fancy ones of cretonne and silkline. With all of the goods in one piece, you could tie a fancy comfort in an afternoon, and sometimes took weeks piecing out others.”²

Although Ida Eisenhower’s quilts probably would not be considered to be exceptional by today’s standards, they are important because they were made by an unsung heroine who raised six very successful sons, one a president of the United States.³ Ida lived and made quilts during extremely difficult times—during the period of reconstruction in Virginia after the Civil War and during the turbulent development of Kansas, then the eastern edge of the wild West. Ida’s quilts are the products of a wife and mother of a very traditional working family with a meager income living during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. Ida Eisenhower’s inclusion of elements of improvisation, asymmetry, and multiple-patterning in her quilts are in stark contrast to her very routine, ordinary life. Ida demonstrated her creative talents through her quilting.

Mount Sidney, Virginia

May 1, 1862–1883

Age: birth to 21

Ida Elizabeth Stover was born to Simon P. and Elizabeth J.(I.)Stover in Augusta County in western Virginia, on May 1, 1862, in a picturesque farm house located on a narrow road winding uphill from the little hamlet of Mount Sidney.⁴ The Stovers had settled in Augusta County sometime between the years 1727 and 1732. Here they had lived through the American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Mexican War, the Spanish-American War, and now the Civil War. Although pictures and descriptions of Ida Stover’s birthplace give the impression of a pleasant pastoral setting—a two-story farm

house on a hillside surrounded by fertile acres of farmland, blooming orchards, and stately trees—it must be remembered that not far away in the Shenandoah Valley in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Union and Confederate troops were battling. Ida was only three years old when the Civil War ended. Its horrors, however, left a deep impression on her. Her family's very strong religious convictions of pacifism and opposition to slavery had caused them to be distrusted by many of their Southern neighbors. Ida stated in later life that the stress of the Civil War caused the early death of her mother. In the 1943 interview, just three years before her death, Ida remembered: "Raiding soldiers, coming through, worrying my mother, frightening her till she died of it! It's all a kind of horror, still. I hated war, with all my soul. Then my father—gone, too. It was like being pulled up by the roots. To be taken off by relatives!"⁵

Five-year-old Ida Stover had seven brothers ranging in age from three to seventeen when her mother died. Ida's father could not handle his large family and the reconstruction of his war-torn farm alone and, therefore, sent his children a few miles up the road to live with their maternal grandparents in 1867. After a couple of years Ida was sent to live with a maternal uncle, Billy Link. Five years later, when Ida was twelve, her father died and Uncle Billy became her legal guardian.

Ida Stover's memories of growing up in her relatives' homes reflected a rather unhappy childhood. "Because I was a girl," Ida Eisenhower remarked nearly eighty years later, "I was told I must listen, not talk, and not expect to go to school much." Instead she was expected to do most of the cooking for her brothers. There was a big brick oven; this became her nemesis: "If I burned anything or took it out underdone, I was punished."⁶

Francis T. Miller, Dwight Eisenhower's biographer, noted:

When Ida was not at school, or cooking meals at home she was generally found in the bare room upstairs making quilts. They were always making quilts. That was the winter pastime. There was no heat in the room and her fingers would get so cold that she would often botch the work and then have to pull it all out and do it over again. It seemed that they were keeping everlasting at it. If you could cook and quilt that was about all a girl had a right to know.⁷

Figure 1. Candlewick bedspread made and signed by Ida Stover.
Photograph by R. G. Elmore.

After her interview with Ida in 1943, Kunigunde Duncan wrote:

a clear picture (developed) of a heartsore little Ida, climbing the steep stairs alone in the quilting room of her relatives, there to do her allotted daily stint—and pull it out and put it in over, out and over, as many times as commanded, and in silence. At ten she had been an expert at darning, patching, hemming.⁸

The earliest known bedcover made by Ida Stover still in existence is a 91" by 67" candlewick bedspread (see figure 1). The design on this spread was created by hooking cotton roving through a single layer of white cotton fabric. The design features a flower basket in the center and a vine border on the left side and across the bottom. The spread is boldly signed in big letters: "Ida Stover." Because of the signature it is assumed that this spread was made while Ida was still a child living in Virginia.

Although Ida Stover had much to be sad about as a young girl, her friends remembered her as "a very pretty girl with light hair,

very vivacious and attractive, and indeed quite charming." One friend noted that Ida was a bright student and very popular.⁹ She apparently was the life of the parties held at each other's homes and attended the nearby Salem Lutheran Church, where she was quite active. Others who knew Ida as a child provided the following composite picture of her: "A fun loving, light-haired, vivacious, attractive girl who did well in her studies, but was something of a tom-boy. She also was devout, eager for an education, and particularly interested in music."¹⁰

Occasionally, Ida was allowed to ride horses with her brothers into the neighboring woods where the orphaned children discussed their futures. Since each of the children would receive a small inheritance as they reached legal age, these plans could become more than just wishful thoughts. Apparently the children decided that when they were adults they would seek their fortunes in far away Kansas. For Ida this would not be an idle dream.

In the latter years of her life Ida vividly remembered the time she had spent in the quilting room of her relatives' home in Virginia.¹¹ It is probable that Ida made her Wandering Foot quilt during this time for her hope chest and eventually took it with her to Kansas.¹² During Ida's latter years the quilt was kept on a shelf in a make-shift closet with a white sheet hanging on the front in the southwest bedroom on the second floor of the Eisenhower home in Abilene, Kansas.

Ida's rose and blue Wandering Foot quilt has lost much of its original brightness. The cotton fabric is yellowed and very worn with many areas of severe fabric deterioration which have been covered with netting for stabilization.¹³ The quilt has a muslin backing which is turned to the front as binding. It is hand pieced and hand quilted in parallel lines using 8-9 stitches per inch.

During her youth Ida Stover also made a hand-pieced, hand-quilted, solid green-and-white cotton quilt in a Six-Pointed Star with Hexagons (Tumbling Block) pattern (see figure 3). The backing on this quilt is white muslin.

Another of Ida Stover's earliest pieces is a bright red, brown, and black wool quilt in an Eight-Pointed Star (Evening Star) pattern (see figure 4). The quilt has a striped flannel backing which is turned to the front as binding. The quilt is hand pieced and loosely hand quilted with four stitches per inch. Although the stitches are

Figure 2. Wandering Foot quilt (Turkey Tracks), ca. 1875, made by Ida Stover while a teenager in Virginia. Photograph by R. G. Elmore.

very course, the rich colors make this a very visually striking quilt. Ida's early quilts clearly demonstrate that she learned the traditional ways of quilting during her youth.

Ida ran away from her uncle's home to the county seat in Staunton when she was about fifteen years old. She had no difficulty finding a family willing to give her room and board in exchange

Figure 3. Six-Pointed Star with Hexagons (Tumbling Block), ca. 1875, quilt made by Ida Stover while a teenager in Virginia. Photograph courtesy of Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

for cooking and helping with the daily chores. Here Ida attended high school. After graduation she got a job teaching in a country school. She was waiting to reach the magical age of twenty-one, when she could claim her inheritance and escape the oppression she felt as a young orphan girl.

Figure 4. Eight-Pointed Star (Evening Star), ca. 1875, wool quilt made by Ida Stover while a teenager in Virginia. Photograph courtesy of Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

LeCompton, Kansas
1883-1885
Age: 21-23

While she was still a child, two of Ida Eisenhower's brothers made their way to Kansas. Because of their excitement about living in the wild West, Ida decided to move west too. During the summer of 1883, with her small inheritance, Ida arrived in Topeka, Kansas. She soon enrolled in Lane University, a small college sponsored by the United Brethren church in LeCompton, Kansas. At this time higher education for women was considered improper in Virginia and, further, Ida defied her River Brethren tradition to gain a college education. Ida eagerly studied music, history, and English.

Classmates soon noticed Ida. Apparently there was intense competition among the male students of Lane University for dates with Ida. David Eisenhower, a shy, thoughtful young engineering student from Hope, Kansas, made winning Ida his primary goal. By the end of his sophomore year David abandoned his plans to become an engineer and turned his full attention to Ida. The young couple complemented each other quite well—she was vivacious and outgoing while he was quite introverted. Many years later while reminiscing about Lane, Ida remembered David as “so much quieter than most, and fastidious in dress and in what he did and said.”¹⁴

There is no evidence that Ida Stover made quilts while a busy college student enrolled at Lane University, but while there she did make a decision that changed the direction of her life, and ultimately, had an impact on world history. During the spring term of 1885, David and Ida were engaged and they married on his birthday, September 23, 1885, in the university chapel (see figure 5).¹⁵ Following their marriage David and Ida decided not to return to Lane University to complete their degrees. Instead they moved to Hope, Kansas, to start a business and a family.

Figure 5. David and Ida Stover Eisenhower's wedding picture, taken on September 23, 1885, at Lane University in LeCompton, Kansas. Photograph courtesy of Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

Hope, Kansas
1885-1889
Age: 23-27

Recognizing the necessity of going to work to support his new wife, David Eisenhower returned to Hope, Kansas, to open a general mercantile store on March 30, 1885.¹⁶ His partner, also recently wed, was Milton D. Good.¹⁷ Good had been clerking in an Abilene clothing store (see figure 6).¹⁸ To get the new store started Milton furnished the business experience and David provided most of the capital from his father's wedding gift, a quarter section of prime Kansas farm land and two thousand dollars. The store was housed in a two-story building with two small apartments on the second floor, one for the Goods and one for the Eisenhowers (see figure 7).¹⁹

The Good and Eisenhower store flourished during the first two years of its existence (see figure 8). Soon, however, droughts and grasshoppers caused many of their customers to lose income.²⁰ The young businessmen had to extend more and more credit and it soon became necessary for David to borrow money to keep the store operating.²¹

It is an understatement to say that David paid less attention to the books of his store than he should have. He turned most of his assets over to his partner to pay bills and wrongfully assumed that the store's books were balancing. Sometime during the fall of 1888, Milton Good and his family left Hope unexpectedly. David soon discovered that many of the bills that he thought had been paid were still outstanding. David quickly turned everything over to a local lawyer and accepted the first job he could find—a low-paying job as an engine wiper for the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad, also known as the Katy, in Denison, Texas. After David left Hope the store was sold and every available asset was used to pay off his creditors.

Ida Eisenhower stayed in Hope to right the situation. She was convinced that their partner had robbed them and that their lawyer was also charging them exorbitant fees. Now pregnant for the second time, Ida borrowed some law books to study, hoping that she could regain some of their assets. In the end all she managed

Figure 6. Milton D. Good with his daughter, Rose, on the left and his sister-in-law, Eva Gleissner, in the center (1912). Rose later became Rose Kretsinger. Photograph courtesy of Kansas State Historical Society.

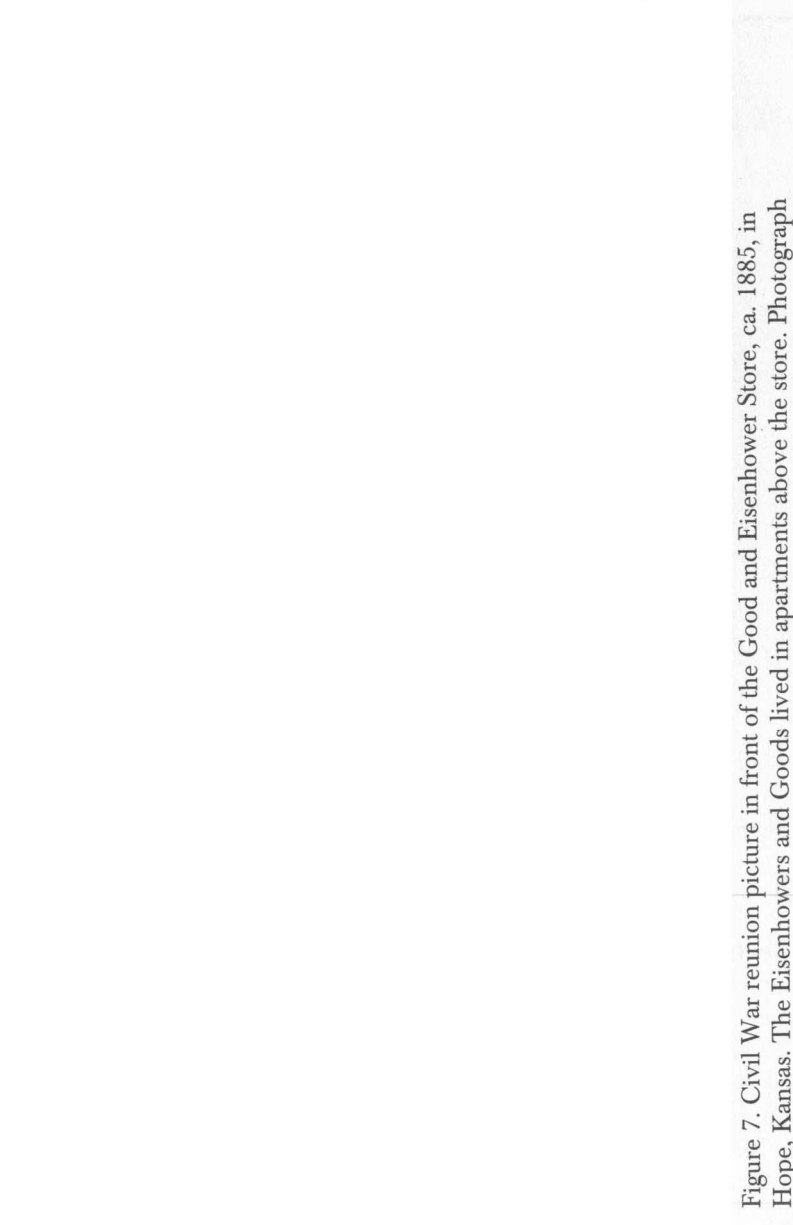


Figure 7. Civil War reunion picture in front of the Good and Eisenhower Store, ca. 1885, in Hope, Kansas. The Eisenhowers and Goods lived in apartments above the store. Photograph courtesy of Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

Figure 8. Advertisement from *Hope Herald*, 20 May 1886, 2. Photograph by R. G. Elmore.

to keep were a few pieces of furniture, including her prized piano. In spite of all of their difficulties in Hope, Ida, many years later remembered, "Hope was such a nice little town."²²

Shortly after the birth of Edgar, Ida and her two very young boys went to join David in Texas. Ida later recalled, "I was as frightened as at any time in my life, when I started out alone, for Texas, a toddler at my skirts and a month-old baby in my arms."²³

Although it is unknown whether Ida made any quilts while living in Hope, it is likely that some of the fabrics that she eventually used in her later quilts were goods from the Good and Eisenhower mercantile store.

Denison, Texas
1889-1891
Age: 27-29

The two years that the Eisenhowers lived in Texas were very unhappy ones. David's salary was less than forty dollars per month and they were separated from their family and friends. During these difficult years in Texas Ida gave birth to a third son, David Dwight (later changed to Dwight David).⁴

The years in Texas were particularly difficult for Ida's husband, David. Apparently the chief source of David's strength at that time, as in later life, was Ida. She had the kind of vivid, intense personality which energized those around her. She took full responsibility for managing the house and caring for the children. She maintained, at least outwardly, a bright, cheerful optimism through most of the dark hours; and whether consciously or unconsciously, she managed to help David restore his badly damaged self-confidence. Ida became, in everything but name, the head of the family. She did it, however, in such a way as to stimulate rather than destroy her husband's self-respect.²⁴

It is likely, that Ida, amidst all of the hardships, made some quilts while living in Texas. Many years after moving to Washington to practice law, her son, Edgar said, "I remember too helping mother sew small patches of cloth together to make bed quilts. You just don't see bed covers like that anymore."²⁵

Currently displayed in the Texas home is a Tumbling Blocks pattern quilt, said to be a quilt Ida made. A 1989 newspaper article referred to this quilt as a Jacob's Ladder design and stated that Ida enlisted the help of two of her small sons to cut out the pieces for the quilt and help fit them together.²⁶ The article identified the two sons as Dwight and Milton.²⁷ Since Dwight was less than two years old and Milton had not yet been born, the newspaper account is not completely accurate. It is more likely that Arthur and Edgar helped their mother make this quilt, if it was actually made in Denison.

Abilene, Kansas
1891–1946
Age: 29–84

Two events prompted the Eisenhower's move to Abilene, Kansas, in 1891—David's mother's death and an offer of a job as an engineer (mechanic) at Belle Springs Creamery. David's father strongly encouraged him to move back to Dickinson County, Kansas, where there were relatives and friends. David and his growing family rented a very small house on Northeast Second Street. Here three more sons (Roy, Paul, and Earl) were born. Paul who was unhealthy from the time of his birth lived for only a few months. Although life was not easy in Abilene at the turn of the century, Ida was extremely pleased to be living among friends and relatives and to retrieve her few stored possessions, including her prized black ebony piano.

In 1898, Dr. Abraham Lincoln Eisenhower, a veterinarian and David's brother, decided to leave Abilene. He sold his simple two-story frame Victorian-era farm cottage, built in 1887, and three acres across the tracks on the south outskirts of town to David. The house on Fourth Street was small by today's standards (818 square feet) for a family of eight plus an elderly parent. Still Dwight Eisenhower noted that the house "seemed a mansion with its upstairs bedrooms."²⁸ At first Dwight slept with two brothers in one large room on the second floor. His parents and baby brother, Earl, occupied a second bedroom, and the oldest son, Arthur, slept in a very small room at the end of the hall. The first floor of the house contained a front parlor, a back parlor, and a combined dining room and kitchen. Two small bedrooms were soon added to the first floor. The last of the Eisenhower boys, Milton, was born a few months after the family moved to their new home.

Ida Eisenhower lived the rest of her life in the Fourth Street house. She had to be very efficient in doing her endless work. The very large barn on their three acres was always filled with an array of farm animals. During the warm months she tended the large vegetable garden and a large orchard. Ida canned vegetables and fruit and helped her boys peddle the surplus to the much more affluent residents on the north side of the tracks. She enjoyed bak-

ing nine loaves of bread every other day for her large family. In addition to all of the necessary daily chores, Ida found time to teach her boys music, cooking, and reading.

According to most accounts, Ida Eisenhower was generally happy throughout her entire life in Abilene. Humming a hymn as she worked, Ida Eisenhower was demonstrably more than merely contented with her lot—like Cinderella, she was living happily ever after, Kansas style (see figure 9).²⁹ She often commented that “there is no rest for the wicked.” Her husband worked very hard too—usually leaving for work at six in the morning and returning at six in the evening.

David and Ida Eisenhower were deeply religious people. After supper David usually sat reading or studying a very large home-made wall-sized diagram of the Egyptian pyramids. He had some abstruse theories about their construction and found satisfaction in trying to prove them. Although the boys always spoke of their parents’ marriage as an ideal partnership, it is easy to conclude that David was generally the silent partner. David had a quick temper and was swift to discipline and probably passed his strong work ethic to his sons.

Unlike David, Ida was an easily identifiable influence on her sons. She was constantly with them. Dwight said, “Mother was by far the greatest influence in our lives. She spent many hours a day with us, while father’s time with us was largely at supper and in the evening.”³⁰

David and Ida gave each of their six sons the freedom to develop and go their individual ways. This was particularly difficult when Dwight chose to become a soldier. Ida believed that soldiering was wicked. Although both David and Ida were crushed when Dwight applied to West Point and eventually left to enroll, neither said a word to dissuade him.

When Dwight picked up his suitcase to walk to the Union Pacific depot to begin his journey to West Point in 1911, Ida stood on her front porch and waved to him. Milton, standing beside her, later stated that she did not shed a tear until Dwight disappeared from sight. Then tears flooded down her cheeks and she spent the day alone in her room.³¹ Ida, however, was always extremely proud of all her boys and always defended their right to make their own

Figure 9. David Eisenhower family in 1902 when Ida was forty years old. Dwight is the boy on the far left of the picture. Photograph courtesy of Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

decisions, just as she did as a young woman so many years earlier.³²

Early in 1942, when he was nearly eighty, David died. Within a short period of time, Ida's grief gave way to a calmness of spirit. At about this time, however, her memory began to seriously fail. She maintained a very cheerful attitude and often joked about her lack of ability to remember anything. Ida's sons hired a practical nurse companion to live with her for the remainder of her life. Ida Eisenhower died quietly in her sleep on September 11, 1946, at the age of eighty-four.

Apparently, Ida Eisenhower made many quilts while living on Fourth Street in Abilene. Near the turn of the century she made several crazy quilts containing a variety of fabrics—silks, cottons, cotton sateens, velvets, velveteens, wools, and flannels. It is likely that some of these were made of goods from the failed Good and Eisenhower store in Hope.

The crazy quilts that Ida Eisenhower made during the early 1900s

Figure 10. Crazy Quilt, ca. 1900. This quilt illustrates Ida Eisenhower's tendency to improvise. Four large crazy blocks compose the lower right corner and two asymmetrical borders compose the left and top of the quilt. Photograph courtesy of Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

show elements of improvisation and asymmetry (see figure 10). Unlike most traditional crazy quilts in which the entire quilt is composed of randomly shaped pieces in no identifiable blocks or in symmetrically placed crazy patch blocks, Ida made large asymmetrical crazy blocks of varying sizes and then attached them to complete an entire quilt. Figure 10 is an excellent example of Ida's

asymmetrical crazy quilts. The quilt in figure 10 contains four large blocks grouped together in one corner and two partial "borders" containing crazy blocks of various sizes. Like most traditionally made crazy quilts, Ida's contained a lot of intricate decorative embroidery around the individual crazy patches.

During the early twentieth century, Ida also made very practical functional quilts. An excellent example is a very nonphotogenic utility quilt made of drab green, gray, brown, and tan cotton and wool fabrics (see appendix, H-82). Several of the squares are pieces cut from trousers. Some of these contain the leg seams. The backing is a blue-and-white cotton ticking and the binding is the back-

Figure 11. Old Maid's Puzzle and Twelve Patch Quilt, ca. 1915. This quilt is an example of Ida's use of multiple patterning. Photograph by R. G. Elmore.

ing turned to the front. The binding varies from 3/4" to 4" in width. The quilt is tied with heavy white utility string. This quilt, as well as others, demonstrate Ida's bent towards being practical and frugal. She used the materials that were readily available to her.

Ida Eisenhower's Old Maid's Puzzle and Twelve Patch quilt, 75" by 75", made in the 1910s, illustrates her characteristic combination of multiple-patterning (see figure 11). This quilt, made of blue, brown, red, and pink cotton-print fabrics, is composed of alternating rows of hand-pieced Twelve Patch blocks and Old Maid's Puzzle blocks. The backing of the quilt, which contains imprints of bed springs, is white muslin. The backing is turned to the front for binding.

During the 1920s and 1930s Ida Eisenhower made quilts using the standard patterns and fabrics of the times; however, she often varied the designs by injecting blocks in colors that did not match the overall pattern or by including blocks that were reversed or different in some way (see figures 12 and 13). Ida's quilts often had borders of varying widths. Ida's later quilts usually included some examples of improvisation, asymmetry, or multiple-patterning.

Ida Eisenhower's Eight-Pointed Star (Evening Star) quilt demonstrates her improvisation and use of asymmetrical color placement in her 1930s quilts (see figure 12). The top seven rows have yellow and orange stars, and the bottom row is composed of four pink stars and one purple star.

Since none of the rooms of Ida's house was large enough to lay out the blocks of a large quilt before attaching them, it is possible that Ida merely sewed blocks together off of a stack of blocks and that the pink and purple blocks just happened to be on bottom of the pile. It is also possible that Ida did not have enough yellow and orange blocks to make the quilt the desired size and, therefore, finished the quilt with other colors. It is also possible, however, that Ida intentionally created unusual placements of color to give her quilts a spark of interest.

Ida Eisenhower used two different prints in making the baskets for her Cherry Basket pattern quilt (see figure 13). In the final construction of her quilt top she did not arrange the blocks symmetrically according to prints as most quilters likely would have done. The seven baskets across the top and down the right side of the quilt are made of the same fabric and the thirteen baskets on

Figure 12. (*Opposite page*) Eight-Pointed Star Quilt (Evening Star), ca. 1930. The top seven rows of this quilt are composed of yellow and orange blocks. The bottom row is composed of four pink blocks and one center purple block. Photograph courtesy of Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

Figure 13. (*Above*) Cherry Basket Quilt Top, ca. 1935. In this quilt top, Ida Eisenhower used two different prints in the baskets. Also, note the unique bases on the baskets. Photograph courtesy of Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

the lower left of the quilt are made of a different fabric. It is also interesting to note that Ida did not make the bases of her baskets solid as most quilters making this quilt did. It appears that the baskets have feet. Like most Cherry Basket quilts, the handles of the baskets on this quilt are appliqued.

None of the rooms in the Fourth Street house were large enough for Ida Eisenhower to place her quilts in traditional quilting frames. The registrar at the Eisenhower Museum stated that no quilting frames were cataloged after Ida died and said that she had never seen any on the premises. Likewise, several people who recall visiting the Eisenhower home as children have stated that they never saw quilting frames. It is likely that Ida did her quilting in one of the outbuildings or quilted on her lap.

Ida Eisenhower probably quit making quilts during the middle to late 1930s or early 1940s. She suffered from declining health, arthritis, and memory loss. Several of her 1930s pieces are unquilted tops. During an interview in 1943 she asked her interviewer to play her prized piano for her. "Yes," she said, sighing with satisfaction, "I am glad I understand music. Thanks. My hands are too stiff for it now, so I have to depend on folks coming in."³³

Ida Eisenhower's methods of making quilts may have been dictated by her resources, her limited space to do quilting, her time constraints, or other unknown reasons. It is likely, however, that her strong convictions, keen intellect, and creative talents played important roles in her creation of unusual and interesting quilts.

Ida's quilts reflect her life. Just as a single purple star appears on her quilt of orange and yellow stars, Ida's life stands out because she was able to change the world in spite of having few resources and living among the ordinary. She and David raised six very successful and influential sons on a meager budget during difficult times. Fortunately, the mother of the thirty-fourth president of the United States also felt throughout her busy life that she had "earned the right to sew," and she exercised this "right" by making quilts in her own way.

Acknowledgments

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Notes and References

1. Kunigunde Duncan, *Earning the Right to do Fancy Work*, (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1957), 1-38.
2. *Ibid.*, 20.
3. Doris Faber, *The President's Mother* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), 69, and John McCallum, *Six Roads from Abilene* (Seattle: Wood and Reber, 1960), 112-22. The extremely successful careers of Ida Eisenhower's six sons are strong indicators of her excellent motherly advice and guidance. Arthur was a banker; Edgar was an attorney; Dwight was an army general and thirty-fourth president of the United States; Roy was a pharmacist; Earl was an electrical engineer; and Milton was president of three major universities, including Kansas State University (the first co-educational land-grant university), Pennsylvania State College, and Johns Hopkins University. There were no "black sheep" in the David and Ida Eisenhower family.
4. Kunigunde Duncan, in her book *Earning the Right to do Fancy Work*, lists Ida's mother's name as Elizabeth Ida Stover. She further stated that Ida Elizabeth was named for her mother, but to avoid confusion, her mother's given names were reversed. It is also interesting to note that Dwight David Eisenhower was originally named "David Dwight Eisenhower" after his father. The younger David changed his name to Dwight David to avoid confusion. The original birth records for Ida did not contain her name. Apparently she was not named at the time of her birth.
5. Duncan, 4.
6. Faber, 68.
7. Francis T. Miller, *Eisenhower, Man and Soldier* (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1944), 90.
8. Duncan, 17-18.
9. Miller, 22. This was a quote from John W. Wine, a childhood friend of Ida Stover. After Ida left Virginia he bought the house in which she was born. The house is currently owned privately and used as rental property.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Duncan, 17-18.
12. Quilts made in the Wandering Foot pattern date from the early 1800s. Since this pattern name was thought to convey a sense of wanderlust it was never used on a young person's bed during the westward expansion of the United States for fear that he or she might decide to travel west and never be heard from again. To change this jinx, the name of the pattern was later changed to Turkey Tracks.
13. Conservation procedures were performed on Ida Eisenhower's quilts during the 1980s by The Textile Conservation Workshop, Inc., South

Salem, NY; Nancy Conlin Wyatt, Textile Conservation, Paris, TX; and Marian Kamm, Registrar of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Museum, Abilene, KS. At that time many of the quilts showed severe deterioration and many were cleaned and covered with nylon tulle to prevent further deterioration. Original repairs made by Ida were preserved. Conservation reports maintained by the museum record the condition of the quilts prior to and after conservation procedures. The quilts not on permanent display at the Eisenhower Center are stored rolled in an environmentally controlled warehouse.

14. Duncan, 17.
15. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *At Ease, Stories I Tell to Friends* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 78. It is interesting to note that there is some confusion about where the wedding took place. Dwight D. Eisenhower stated in his book that his parents were married in the campus chapel by Rev. E. D. Slade; however, the September 24, 1885, *Lecompton Monitor* gives the following account:

MARRIED—At the residence of Rev. W. D. Stover, Wednesday evening, September 23d, 1885, by Rev E. D. Slade, Mr. D. J. Eisenhower, of Hope Kansas, and Miss Ida Stover of Lecompton, Kansas.

About twenty of the friends and relatives were present to witness the ceremony. A number of presents were bestowed by those in attendance. We wish them a prosperous and happy voyage over the sea of life, and may their bliss be unalloyed.

16. *Hope Herald*, 4 April 1885.
17. Milton D. Good's daughter was Rose Good Kretsinger (1886–1963). Rose Kretsinger received a degree in design from the Art Institute of Chicago in 1908, worked professionally as a jewelry designer, and traveled in Europe for a year. She began her quilting career at the age of forty after her mother died in an automobile accident. She found inspiration for her patterns in antique quilts, primarily appliques. Like many of her contemporaries, she hired professional quilters to execute her designs. Many of her quilts are now housed in the Spencer Museum on the University of Kansas in Lawrence. Although Ida Eisenhower and Rose Kretsinger lived much of their lives during the same time period and within about one hundred miles of each other, it is unlikely that either influenced the other's quilting. For further information, see Barbara Brackman, "Emporia, 1925–1950: Reflections on a Community" in *Kansas Quilts and Quilters* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 107–25.
18. Thomas Branigar, "No Villains—No Heroes, the David Eisenhower—Milton Good Controversy," *Kansas History* 15 (Autumn 1992), 168–79.
19. Jacob Eisenhower, David Eisenhower's father, built a house in Hope in

1884. See *Abilene Gazette*, 4 April 1884. Jacob also owned land in the business section of Hope, and to help David start his business, mortgaged the farm he planned to give David and used the money to build a store on the Main Street property. See Deed Book S, p. 628, Register of Deeds, Dickinson County Courthouse, Abilene, KS.
20. Branigar, 168–79.
 21. Kenneth S. Davis, *Soldier of Democracy, A Biography of Dwight Eisenhower* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, and Company, Inc., 1945), 34–38.
 22. Duncan, 17.
 23. *Ibid.*, 11.
 24. Davis, 41–43.
 25. McCallum, 36.
 26. The quilt said to have been made by Ida Eisenhower and now on display at the birthplace of Dwight D. Eisenhower is usually named Tumbling Block; however, there is a *Woman's Day* (ca. 1940) quilt pattern similar to the one Ida made called Jacob's Ladder. See Barbara Brackman, *Encyclopedia of Pieced Quilt Patterns* (Paducah, KY: American Quilter's Society, 1993), 26–27. The quilt displayed at the Eisenhower birthplace was made much earlier than the 1940s.
 27. *Bryan-College Station Eagle*, 6 August 1989, 4c.
 28. Eisenhower, 72.
 29. Faber, 76.
 30. Nona Brown Thompson, "Ida Stover Eisenhower, Mother of Six Distinguished Sons," *Kanhistique* 14 (February, 1989): 2.
 31. Faber, 78.
 32. Duncan, 25. Following is a quote from Ida Eisenhower, given in an interview in 1943: "I believe you're the only one that I've met since Dwight's become prominent who hasn't asked me why he's a fighter, chose to be, when I'm so against war. And since you haven't asked, I'm going to tell you. From childhood, I chose my way. He was free to choose his. War will never bring peace; but so long as there are those who make war, someone has to go to our defense."
 33. *Ibid.*, 10.

Appendix A. Quilts made by Ida Stover Eisenhower stored at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Museum in Abilene, Kansas.

Each of these quilts was examined, photographed, and documented by the authors during the summer of 1993. The quilts are listed in chronological order and have the accession number assigned by the museum.

- H-77 Wandering Foot (Turkey Tracks), ca. 1875, 83" by 68".
Red and blue print cotton fabrics; white muslin cotton backing; backing turned to front as binding; hand pieced and hand quilted (8 to 9 stitches per inch).
- H-1697 Six-Pointed Star with Hexagons, ca. 1875, 72" by 72".
Green and white solid cotton fabrics; white muslin cotton backing; applied white binding; hand pieced and hand quilted (7 stitches per inch).
- H-81 Nine Patch Variation, ca. 1875, 72" by 52".
Red and brown cotton fabrics; red and black backing; backing turned to front as binding; hand pieced and hand quilted (8 to 9 stitches per inch).
- H-78 Eight-Pointed Star (Evening Star), ca. 1875, 72" by 57".
Red, brown, and black wool fabrics; wine striped cotton flannel backing; backing turned to front as binding; hand pieced and hand quilted (4 stitches per inch).
- H-1633 Four Patch and Sixteen Patch, ca. 1900, 72" by 62".
Brown, tan, and gray cotton flannel fabrics; striped brown and white cotton backing; knife-edge binding; machine pieced and hand tied with yellow yarn.
- H-80 Nine Patch Variation, ca. 1900, 66" by 59".
Blue, tan, lavender, off-white cotton print and flannel fabrics; indigo-blue Nine Patch at center surrounded by plaid flannel Nine Patch blocks; lavender-and-white plaid flannel backing; backing turned to front as binding; hand pieced and hand tied with light green and aqua yarns.
- H-75 Crazy Quilt containing Delegate Badge, ca. 1900, 80" by 72".
Multicolored silk, cotton, velveteen, and velvet fabrics; cotton sateen backing; backing turned to front as binding; black velvet block initialed "I. E. E." (Ida Elizabeth Eisenhower) in gold colored thread; red ribbon with words "Delegate Badge, Department of Kansas, Salina, Jan'y 1890. 9th Annual Encampment"; single patch rectangles and squares borders in varying widths; cotton sateen backing, backing turned to front as binding; machine pieced, decorative embroidery around patches stitched through to back.
- H-74 Crazy Quilt, ca. 1900, 81" by 73".
Multicolored silk, cotton, velveteen, and wool fabrics; four large crazy patch blocks with borders of one width on side and a different width

- along the length; brown and gray striped cotton backing; black blind stitch as edging; decorative embroidery around patches; tied with orange and yellow yarns.
- H-73 Crazy Quilt with Log Cabins and Fan, ca. 1900, 83" by 71". Multicolored cotton, wool, silk fabrics; borders of pieced rectangles on outside edge, center area contains recognizable shapes such as stars, hearts, log cabins, and fans; blue and white striped cotton flannel backing; backing turned to front as binding; decorative embroidery around patches stitched through to back.
- H-82 Utility Quilt, ca. 1900, 83" by 66".
Drab green, gray, brown, and tan heavy cotton and wool fabrics; blue-and-white cotton ticking backing; backing turned to front as binding varying in widths from 3/4" to 2"; machine pieced and tied with heavy white utility string.
- H-1160 Single Patch Scrap Quilt, ca. 1900, 83" by 66".
Multicolored silk, rayon, and cotton pillow ticking sewn in single rectangular and square patches; hand pieced and hand quilted (4 stitches per inch).
- H-1597 Whole Cloth Comforter, ca. 1900, 86" by 68".
Green and pink print cotton reversible fabric; tied with salmon pink yarn.
- H-83 Velvet Crazy or Show Quilt, embroidered "1912", 64" by 42".
Tan, purple, green, gold, red, pink, orange, and blue velvet fabrics; 25 full-circle, 15 half-circle, and 2 quarter-circle patches surrounded by border varying in width from 8" to 6"; chrysanthemum-flowered cotton print backing; cornflower-blue ribbon binding; elaborate embroidery around patches sewn through to backing.
- H-79 Trip Around the World, ca. 1915, 85" by 64".
Multicolored solid and print cotton and wool fabrics pieced in 3" squares; brown, gray, and white plaid cotton flannel backing; backing turned to front for binding; hand tied with red and orange yarn.
- H-139 Trip Around the World, ca. 1915, 80" by 75".
Multicolored cotton print and solid fabrics pieced in 3 1/2" squares with center of four red print squares surrounding one white square; two sides have applied bindings, other two sides have back turned to front for binding; machine and hand pieced; hand quilted (6 stitches per inch).
- H-1191 Nine Patch in Two Sizes, ca. 1915, 90" by 74".
Red, blue, tan, and white striped and gingham cotton fabrics; alternating rows of 9 1/2" square nine-patch blocks and 5" square nine-patch blocks joined with tan striped sashing; flour-sack backing imprinted with words "J E Brewer Abilene, Kansas"; machine pieced and hand quilted (6 stitches per inch).
- H-1578 Old Maid's Puzzle and Twelve Patch, ca. 1915, 75" by 75".
Blue, brown, red, and pink cotton print fabrics; alternating rows of

twelve-patch blocks and Old Maid's Puzzle blocks set together with strips of red-and-white fabrics; white muslin backing containing imprints of bed springs; backing turned to front as binding; hand pieced and hand quilted (6 stitches per inch).

- H-72 Grandmother's Flower Garden, ca. 1925, 79" by 69".
Multicolored pastel print and white cotton fabrics; scalloped border with white applied binding; hand pieced and hand quilted (6 stitches per inch).
- H-71 Nine Patch, ca. 1930, 84" by 59".
Pastel print and solid cotton fabrics; Nine Patch blocks set together with white sashing and surrounded with yellow border; white muslin backing; white applied binding; hand pieced and hand quilted (5-7 stitches per inch).
- H-76 Eight-Pointed Star, ca. 1930, 82" by 53".
Pink, purple, yellow, and orange print and solid cotton fabrics; Star blocks set on diagonal with white cotton fabric surrounded with bright yellow border; white muslin backing; white binding; hand pieced and hand quilted (7 stitches per inch).
- H-138 Eight-Pointed Star Top, ca. 1935, 86" by 66".
Bright print and white cotton fabric Star blocks set on diagonal with white cotton fabric, surrounded by pieced yellow and white border with brown square set on diagonal; machine pieced.
- H-137 Cherry Basket Top, ca. 1935, 98" by 81".
Bright yellow print and white solid cotton fabrics; hand pieced with handles on baskets hand appliqued.
- H-1156 Crazy Quilt Pillow, ca. 1900, 14" by 18".
Multicolored cotton and wool fabrics; feather-stitch embroidery on crazy patches with seven Eisenhower boys' names embroidered on blocks; orange satin cord as binding.
- H-1157 Crazy Quilt Pillow, ca. 1900, 18 1/2" by 18 1/2". Multicolored cotton and velvet fabrics; feather stitch embroidery on crazy patches with name "Ida" embroidered on top; orange satin cord binding.
- H-1158 Crazy Quilt Pillow, ca. 1900, 17" by 19".
Multicolored cotton and velvet fabrics; feather-stitch embroidery on crazy patches with name "David" embroidered on top; orange satin cord binding.
- H-1159 Trip Around the World Pillow, ca. 1915, 18 1/2" by 17 3/4". Multicolored cotton print fabrics; postage-stamp-sized pieces arranged in Trip Around the World pattern; tan floral cotton backing; yellow cord binding.
- H-1183 Irish Chain Pillow, ca. 1935, 16" by 16".
Yellow and white solid cotton fabrics; white cotton backing, seamed edge around pillow.