

Quilt: #204 Rising Star

Quilter: Hannah Bowling Stancil

Sponsor: Town of West Union

Entering the town of West Union, South Carolina, at the Highway 11 East exit ramp, one immediately sees the *Rising Star* quilt panel. The Town of West Union sponsored this quilt panel to welcome you to enjoy the town, its shops and hospitality. This panel is a replica of a fabric quilt made by Hannah Bowling Stancil, a resident of West Union. Hannah began quilting when she was 12 years old under her grandmother's tutelage. The *Rising Star* was her grandmother's favorite pattern. After Hannah became a mother, she decided to use the *Rising Star* pattern to make her son's quilt. "I'm so proud to have my grandmother's gift to sew. Seeing that my star was chosen for the Quilt Trail is an honor and my grandmother couldn't be any prouder of me."

Quilt pattern names often change. The *Rising Star* pattern was first known as *Stars and Squares* when it was published by the *Ladies Art Company* (1897). In 1929, Ruth Finley called the same pattern *Rising Star* in her book entitled *Old Patchwork Quilts and the Women Who Made Them*.

West Union, in northwest corner of South Carolina, on the edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains, was originally home to the Cherokee Indians. Under duress, the Cherokees gave up most of their lands in 1777 under the Treaty of DeWitts' Corner and in 1816 ceded their last remaining lands under the Treaties of Washington.

Two prominent individuals who played a large role in the history of the town of West Union were John Gresham, a man originally from Culpepper County, Virginia who settled in the Keowee River area in 1783, and his son Joseph Grisham*. John Gresham married a widower, Mrs. Watson, after moving to South Carolina. Mrs. Watson inherited land and a mill at High Falls from her late husband. After her death John Gresham eventually acquired this property and continued to purchase additional tracts of land on which he built several commercial businesses. In 1832, upon filing a Revolutionary War pension application, he gave much of his property to his son, Col. Joseph Grisham.

Joseph Grisham, born in 1789 in Pendleton, South Carolina, lived on his father's land near the Keowee River and continued to accumulate large tracts of land in the surrounding areas. He was a successful merchant, built several mills and developed several businesses, all of which were profitable. He became a Colonel in the local militia. In 1848, he was ordained as a Baptist minister. According to George Bent Shealy, as stated in his book *Walhalla: A German Settlement in Upstate South Carolina* (1990) "Rev. Joseph Grisham was a nationally recognized temperance advocate and organized a temperance union at Pickens Court house. When he organized a union at his new home to the west, the community became known as West Union, as the town is known today." Because of Rev. Grisham's advocacy of moderation or abstinence of liquor, West Union had a long history of temperance.

When his health started to fail, Rev. Grisham began looking to divest himself of his large land holdings and many businesses. In December 1849, after a year of negotiations, trustees of the German Colonization Society of Charleston bought over 17,000 acres of land for \$27,000 from Rev. Grisham who, by that time, was one of the largest land proprietors of the upcountry. This area of land was all known as West Union at the time. Once it was sold, part of it became what is today known as Walhalla. In 1851, Rev. Grisham moved to Canton, Georgia where his daughter lived and where he died April 9, 1857.

Today West Union is home to 300 inhabitants; it is described by Judge Alexander Macaulay as a “community minded town where we live, work and enjoy life with our neighbors.”

*The Grisham family name is sometimes spelled either Gresham or Grisham. A schoolmaster of Joseph’s miswrote his last name and he and his brother adopted the spelling with an “i”.