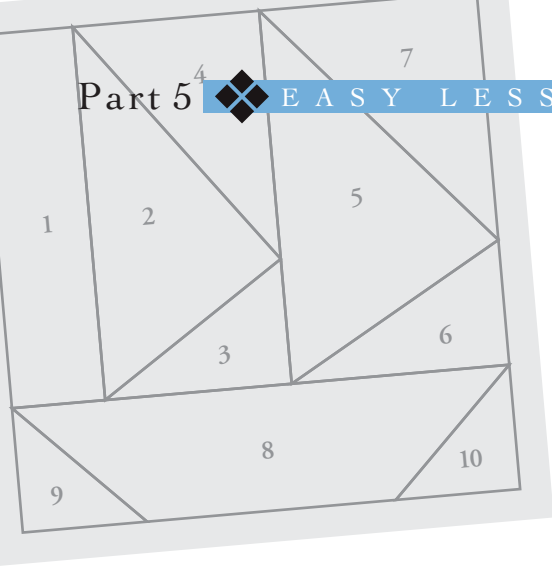


# Piecing on Paper

## Converting Traditional Designs to Paper-Foundation Patterns



If I had a fat quarter for each time I was asked how to convert traditionally pieced patterns into paper-pieced patterns, I would be swimming in fat quarters. Those who have come to enjoy the perfection they can achieve through paper-foundation piecing want the opportunity to foundation piece traditional designs. In this lesson, I will share some ways to do this.

Most traditional patterns are based on a grid system such as the four patch or nine patch. This is good news for traditional piecers because it offers the opportunity to reproduce the designs using templates or rotary cutting and a logical progression for joining the patches. However, the many intersections created by the grids are often roadblocks for foundation piecing because the subsequent patches of fabric need to cross the preceding intersecting seams.

In an earlier lesson, I described how paper-foundation-pieced designs are straight-seam, sequenced designs where the subsequent pieces cover the preceding intersecting seams. In Fig. 1, the patch 2 can be added to patch 1, and patch 3 covers the seam between them—the preceding seam.

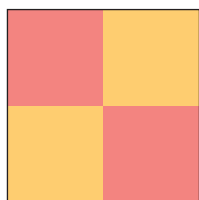
The first thing to consider when converting traditional blocks to paper-pieced designs is that the foundation drawing is the reverse image of the finished block. If the block is symmetrical, it will appear the same when reversed. If it is asymmetrical,

it will be the reverse image (Fig. 2).

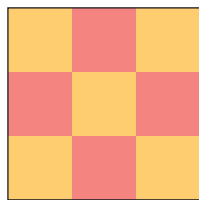
If you are using a computer to draw the image, draw it as the block will appear finished, and use the option to “flip horizontal” to create the reverse image on which you can place the numbers. If you are drawing on graph paper, draw it first as a finished image, and then make a tracing that you can turn over to place the numbers.

The next step is to consider where you can place patch 1 and continue adding pieces to create the block or block unit that will be joined to other units.

Using the reverse image drawing, consider your options. In the Whirlwind example, I cannot continue adding patches to the right of patch 1 because there is an intersecting seam. I can continue to the left, adding through patch 6. But I cannot go beyond 6 because that would create a section without a straight side. Instead, I can make a second, identical unit (numbered 7-12) and stitch the two together to create the block (Fig. 3).



FOUR PATCH



NINE PATCH

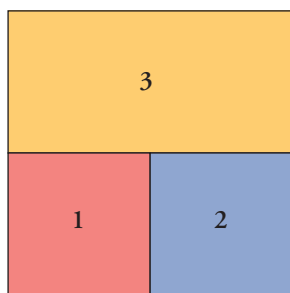
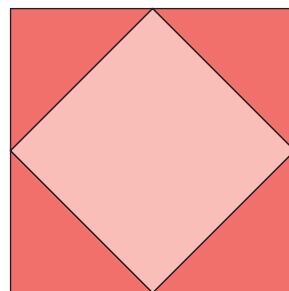
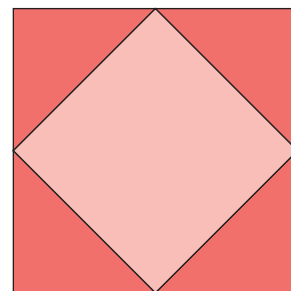


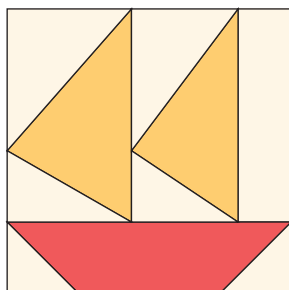
Fig. 1



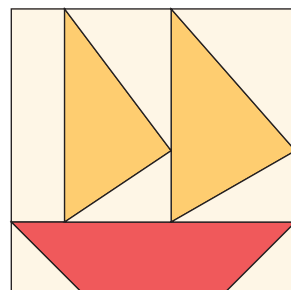
SYMMETRICAL DESIGN



SYMMETRICAL DESIGN REVERSED

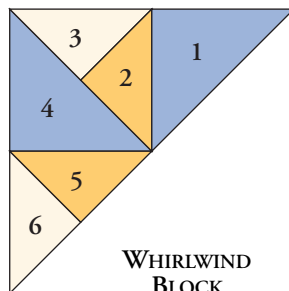
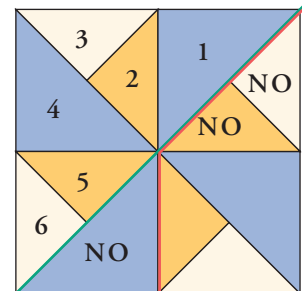
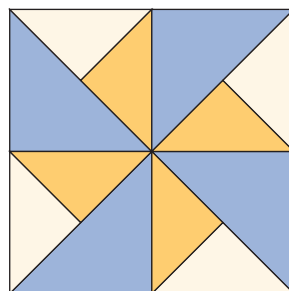


ASYMMETRICAL DESIGN



ASYMMETRICAL DESIGN REVERSED

Fig. 2



WHIRLWIND BLOCK

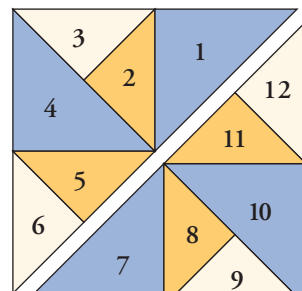


Fig. 3

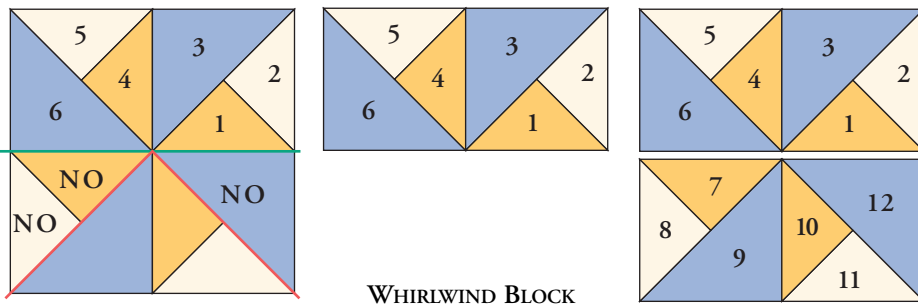


Fig. 4

WHIRLWIND BLOCK

An alternative sequence for the same block would be to begin with patch 1 as a smaller triangle, and continue through patch 6 creating a rectangular unit. Repeat for the other half of the block. Since rectangles are easier to work with, I would choose this option (Fig. 4).

Sometimes the units that make up a block are not the same size or shape, however that is not required. Just break the block into the appropriate sections and analyze and number each one as needed.

Another solution for dealing with intersecting seams is to pre-piece units that are then added to the foundation. In my patterns, pieced units are indicated by a double slash across the seam, and they are assigned one number in the piecing sequence. In the Ohio Star block, quarter-square triangles create pieced units for patches 3, 11, 12, and 15, and the block is broken into three units.

To measure for the cut size of the quarter-square patches, measure the long side of the triangle and add  $1\frac{1}{2}$ ". Cut a square this size, and cut it diagonally twice. Join a red triangle to a white one; press the seam allowance toward the darker fabric. Pin the unit in place on the paper foundation, and machine baste across the seam to check that it is a good match. Sew to the foundation, and press the unit open. Pin the pre-sewn seam of the pieced unit 3 with

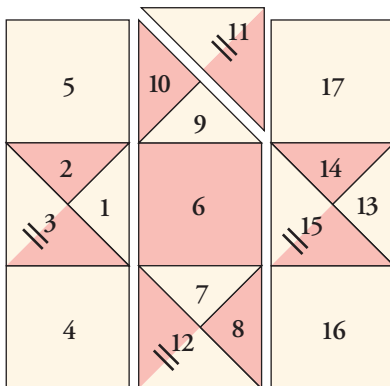


Fig. 5

OHIO STAR BLOCK

the line on the foundation. Machine baste about  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " across this pre-sewn seam to secure the outer edge of the unit. Add remaining patches to foundation (Fig. 5).

Yet another solution for converting blocks is to adjust the seam lines to create a similar version of the block. In the Colorado block (Fig. 6), I first reversed the image and then adjusted the seam lines by eliminating several intersecting seams. The block is divided into four units to create a similar Colorado block.

(Cont. on pg. 78)

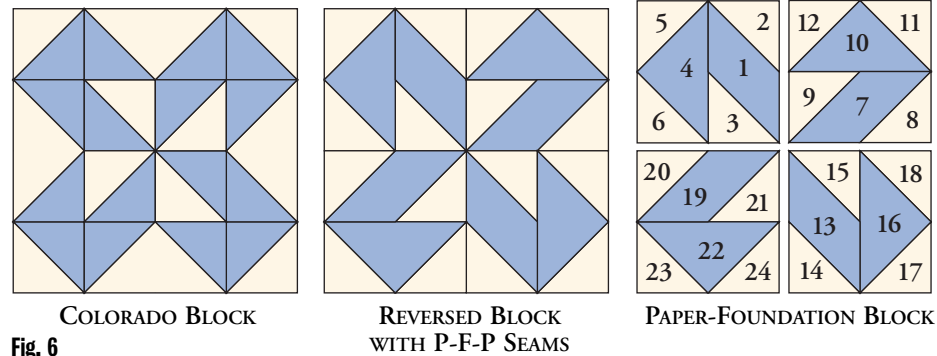
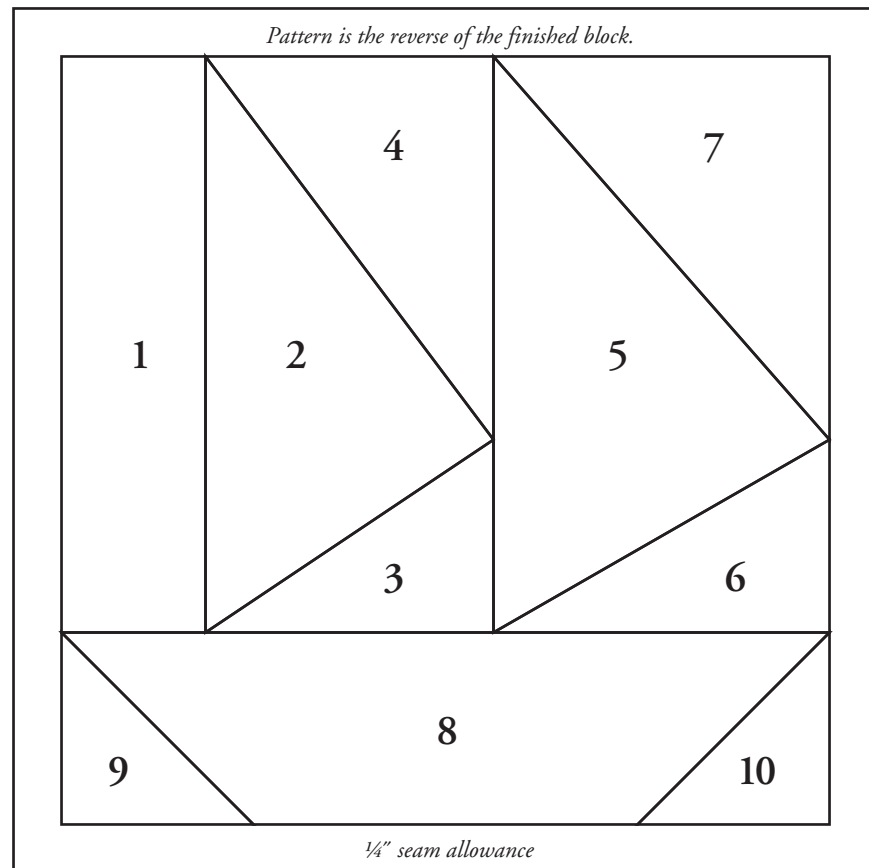


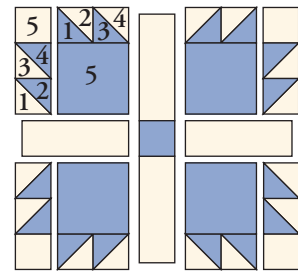
Fig. 6



**Next month:**  
a new series of  
Easy Lessons  
will begin.

## EASY LESSON

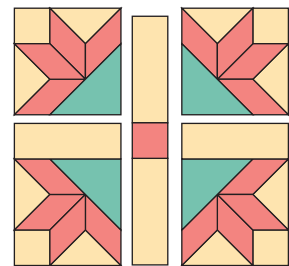
(Cont. from pg. 47)



BEAR PAW BLOCK

Fig. 7

It is not always feasible to convert a traditional design into a paper-pieced pattern. The decision whether to paper piece a part or all of a block depends on your skill level in using traditional methods and the size of the block. The Bear Paw block offers the opportunity to paper piece the small triangles in two sections used to make the corner units. The remainder of the patches can be cut traditionally and joined to the paper-pieced units, if you are comfortable with traditional piecing. If you're not, or the cut sizes are difficult to calculate, the center strip could also be foundation pieced.



GOOSE TRACK BLOCK

Fig. 8

The Goose Track block is not a good candidate to paper-foundation piece. It just has too many intersecting and angled seams. If you begin with the square in the corner, the 45-degree seam of the next two pieces is a roadblock. If you begin with one of the parallelograms, inset pieces are created.

With a bit of practice and exploration of your options for various starting places in a traditional block, you will discover that some are good candidates to be converted to paper-piecing, and some are not. It really comes down to problem solving—the more you work with traditional patterns to explore the paper-piecing options, the better you will become at it.

This is my last lesson in this paper-foundation-piecing series. I have enjoyed sharing the techniques that make this wonderful technique a joy for me, and I hope these lessons will enhance your paper-piecing adventures. ♦