

“Pathfinder” Barn Quilt Finds its Way to Tilleda

Mel and Pat Geschke come to the Shawano area on a regular basis from their home in Lomira, about two hours south of Shawano. One of the main reasons they come to Shawano is to see the barn quilts that have set the county ablaze over the past year and a half. The second reason is to do geocaching.

Mel and Pat like the Shawano barn quilts so much that they decided they'd like to sponsor one themselves. So they contacted project coordinator Jim Leuenberger to pick out a pattern and asked Leuenberger to find a barn in the area for their quilt.

The farm where the quilt is now on display is owned by Larry and Judy Gast, W13285 County D in Tilleda. The property is the original homestead of Larry's great uncle Henry (Hank) Maas. Hank and his wife Rose settled on the property in the late 19th century. They cleared the land and used the timber to build the house, barn and out buildings. It is believed they processed the timber at the Tilleda sawmill located on the North Branch of the Embarrass River. The property remained in the Maas family until 1990.

Larry grew up in the Tilleda area where his grandfather was an auto dealer and his dad the postmaster. After graduating from college he moved to Texas to pursue a career in electronics. After retiring in 1988 he acquired the property as a summer home. He and his wife Judy live there in the summer and Texas in the winter. His hobbies include collecting and restoring old tractors, two of which are shown in the photo that accompanies this article.

The barn quilt pattern the Geschkes selected is called “Pathfinder,” which is appropriate considering their interest in geocaching. Geocaching is a real world outdoor treasure hunting game. Players try to locate hidden containers, called geocaches, using GPS-enabled devices and then share their experiences on line. The Geschkes have placed 20 caches in places near some of their favorite Shawano County barn quilts, all in safe parking areas, as a way to draw fellow geocachers to the area. Almost every cemetery in Shawano County has a geocache and the Geschkes invite local geocachers to add to their list of 20. Their geocache address is Wi_pattymel.

As to why they decided to sponsor a barn quilt, the Geschkes said they just love all the others and thought it would be a nice way to have something they did still around after they are gone. “We think it's a great project for drawing tourists to the area,” they said. “We have driven around the area several times and have taken pictures of more than half of them. Finding new ones that aren't on our list is always a nice surprise.”

The “Pathfinder” barn quilt is Shawano county's 138th.