

Natzke Barn Quilt is Shawano County's 178th

Steve and Valerie Natzke have sponsored Shawano County's 178th barn quilt on their farm at W16251 Hirt Road, Tigerton. "When we heard about Shawano County's barn quilt project, we knew we wanted to be part of it," Val said. "Our grandparents farmed and we were fortunate to have learned from them how to appreciate the land and its bounty. We value and appreciate our heritage and history and the history of this property. Our barn quilt is a way for us to honor that."

Steve and Val had lived in the Village of Tigerton for over 20 years and were looking for a country property on which they could keep a few horses. In 2005, they bought part of what is locally known as the Pat Hauser farm. The buildings had fallen into disrepair, so they spent two years fixing and patching before moving there in 2007.

The pattern Steve and Val chose for their barn quilt is called Hands All Around because it represents their belief in volunteering and helping others. They have given lots of time to their church and community groups over the years. "It's true that you get more than you give when you volunteer," Val said. The quilt pattern forms a circle and Steve and Val feel it represents the circle of life. Steve also said it represents Harry Chapin's song All My Life is a Circle. The colors were chosen to represent the beautiful sunrises and sunsets Steve and Val get to enjoy from their hilltop farm.

The history of the property that this barn was built on has been traced back to 1880. That year, the firm of Newbold and Livingston bought it from the State of Wisconsin. They were in the lumber business and built the first sawmill in the Village of Tigerton. In 1886, it was sold to Herman Nedden.

In 1891, it was purchased by Gust and Caroline Kauffman, who locals say homesteaded here and lived in a log cabin. They came from Germany in 1884 and made their way to Tigerton in 1886, probably following the railroad. They raised 12 children, one of whom, Gust Kauffman Jr., eventually took over the farm. The barn was build in 1902 and the current house in 1913.

During the Great Depression, Gust Jr. had a string of bad luck and was unable to keep up with the taxes and the property reverted to the Bank. In 1935, Antone Hauser purchased the land from the bank, farmed it for 30 years, and also raised 12 children. His son Pat eventually took it over.

Pat Hauser farmed the property from 1957 until 2000, and raised three children. Every Sunday afternoon, family members came to the farm where music and beer were shared. Hauser's Hotshots band members played at those gatherings.

Pat sold the farm to Scott and Tammy Wendler in 2000. They rented the house for a few years and housed replacement dairy calves in the barn.

Steve and Val bought 10 acres of the 80 and the buildings in 2005. Scott and Tammy kept the remaining 70 acres as cropland.

The Natzke barn quilt was painted by the Shawano County barn quilt committee and was put on display by LeRoy Raddant and Bruce Teetzen of Raddant Electric in Shawano. The Natzkes had hired a neighbor, Fran Schider, to paint the barn prior to the quilt being put on display.

Anyone who would like to participate in Shawano County's barn quilt project can contact project coordinator Jim Leuenberger at 715-524-5685 or by email at jamesmleuenberger@yahoo.com. You can also contact Patti Peterson, tourism manager at the Shawano Country Chamber of Commerce at 715-524-2139 or tourism@shawano.com. A link on the Shawano Chamber Web site includes photos and information on every quilt on display in Shawano County. Just go to www.shawanocountry.com and click on the barn quilt icon.