

County's 230th Barn Quilt is Anniversary Gift from Sons

Shawano County's 230th barn quilt now adorns a barn on the Gary and Patty Retzlaff farm at W8018 Belle Plaine Avenue, Shawano. It was given to them by their three sons, Nate, Luke and Aaron, as a gift for their 36th wedding anniversary, which they celebrated in 2012. The pattern they selected for their quilt is called Arrow Crown.

The Retzlaff dairy farm is the oldest farm in Shawano County with continuous ownership by one family. The original 80-acre farm was owned by Hannah Wescott. In 1863, she assigned it to Carl and Carolina Retzlaff, and it has been in the Retzlaff family ever since. William and Minnie took over in 1882, followed by Alex and Louisa in 1920, Roland "Butch" and Betty in 1958 and Gary and Patty in 1992. Next year, Gary and Patty's son, Nate, and his wife, Tajia, will be taking ownership, becoming the sixth generation of Retzlaffs with ownership of the farm.

The original barn was built in 1913 and the house in 1896. "The barn needed some work," Gary said, "so getting the barn quilt was a good incentive for us to fix it up." The end of the barn was very bowed out, so that was fixed first. Then red steel siding was added.

Nate is planning additional changes as well. A new free stall barn will be built this fall and the existing barn remodeled with a flat barn parlor. The Holstein dairy herd will probably grow to about 120 milking cows from its present 80 head. The farm totals 189 acres, with about 170 tillable.

The Retzlaff 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.

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 barn quilt on display in Shawano County. Just go to www.shawanocountry.com and click on the barn quilt icon.