

County's 260th Barn Quilt has Dairy Theme

Linda and Eldon Heling have sponsored Shawano County's 260th barn quilt for their farm at N3724 Shorewood Lane, Clintonville. The quilt pattern design includes a silhouette of a Brown Swiss dairy cow to represent the 33-cow dairy herd the Helings have on their farm. The pattern is called Brown Swiz and was painted by the Shawano County barn quilt committee. Eldon and Linda chose the pattern and the name to remember Eldon's German roots. The word Swiz is from 16th century Middle High German.

Eldon has lived on a dairy farm his entire life, growing up on a farm within a half mile of the neighbor farm, the one he and Linda took over and renovated in 1989, nine years after they were married. Eldon and Linda now own neighbor farms Eldon had the opportunity to work on and become friends with while growing up. Eldon always liked Brown Swiss cattle, although the majority of their dairy herd consists of Holsteins. He bought his first Brown Swiss calf from shirt-tail relative Charles Buettner near Red River in 1981.

Eldon and his twin brother, Allen, inherited their parents' 80-acre nearby dairy farm in 1977, but the brothers and Linda decided to dissolve their farm partnership in 1989 and have Eldon and Linda take over the nearby neighbor farm and have Allen take over the home dairy. Eldon owns 30 acres of his original home farm while Allen owns the buildings and 50 acres of the original home farm. Both Eldon and Allen have purchased additional land a little at a time as retiring neighbor farms came up for sale. Eldon and Linda's farm now totals 180 acres and the barn, built in the early 1900s, has been renovated.

The farm was homesteaded by a Schwartz family, including Charles Schwartz, then his son Paul, who died in 1948 at the age of 47. Paul's son Melvin took over the farm work after his father's death, but ownership was maintained in his mother Mary's name. Allen, Eldon and Linda purchased the farm from Mary and her family in 1985.

Linda was born on the Island of Bermuda and met Eldon through church attendance of the same denomination, a plan where young people can write and meet each other. Linda's mother, Ellen Bourne, grew up on a dairy farm in Almonte, Ontario, Canada and Linda always liked her mother's farm stories. They lived off the land with no modern conveniences, raising animals including foxes for fur and cooling their food in the creek. Linda has some of the furs her mother had before she was born. Linda likes donkeys and through that hobby she and her mother became acquainted with their neighbors. They enjoyed letting neighbor children of Carl Zahn ride their pet donkey (Zahns own the lot in front of the Laude house and the farm across the road from Allen's farm). Another neighbor, Melvin Koeller and his grandson, Chad, and father, Butch Adams, enjoyed the donkeys and bought their own, eventually naming their road Donkey Lane.

While out walking, Ellen and Linda met Margaret Laude, who lived at the end of their road. Margaret said she had been asked to name the road and liked the name Shorewood Lane. She called her farm Shorewood Acres.

"The Wisconsin countryside is very pretty," Linda said. "We figured guests passing our farms would enjoy seeing our barn quilts that add to the barns and making their ride in the country more enjoyable. I think the barn quilt project has really added pride to the people who have them and encourages them to take care of their barns. We all know if the old barns disappear, part of our history will be gone."

The Heling barn quilt was put on display by Rich and Keith Raddant 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.