

County's 272nd Barn Quilt has American Gothic Theme

Shawano County's 272nd barn quilt is now on display on a barn owned by Dennis and Katherine Buntrock at W10543 County M, Shawano, about 12 miles west of Shawano. It was sponsored by Tom Whitemarsh of Madison, Wisconsin, a long-time friend of Jim and Irene Leuenberger, who have overseen the barn quilt project since it was started in 2010. It is the third barn quilt Whitemarsh has sponsored.

The quilt pattern has been named Friendship and is in memory of Carl and Gertrude Routzahn, from whom the Buntrocks purchased the 120-acre farm in 1990. The couples were friends for many years and farmed together by sharing machinery and baling hay with family, nephews and neighbor boys. "Carl taught me a lot about farming," Dennis said, "so we thought it would be appropriate to do the quilt in his and Gertrude's memory. We also want to thank Tom for sponsoring our quilt and supporting the Shawano County barn quilt project."

Tom Whitemarsh sponsored the quilt in the name of his son, Karl. The previous quilts he sponsored were for himself and for his daughter, Regina. "Karl and I were blown away by the Grant Wood motif on the quilt because it is so iconic for American rural life," Tom said. "Making it even more special is that Karl's Aunt Gina is from Iowa and she always loved Grant Wood."

Echoing his dad's remarks, Karl said, "I'm proud to be an active participant in this amazing barn quilt project in Shawano County. Adorning and adding beauty to barns with a barn quilt is a potent symbol of traditional agriculture and is a creative way to actively demonstrate a commitment to preserving these historic buildings. The incorporation of the iconic Grant Wood painting, American Gothic, in this latest quilt shows the wonderful evolution of the barn quilt medium in Shawano County."

The original 160-acre farm was purchased in 1856 by John Illsley. Over the years, the farm changed hands many times. In 1967, Alfred and Phyllis Konkol sold the farm to Carl and Gertrude Routzahn. They raised Hereford beef cattle, usually having between 110 and 130 head. Since the Buntrocks purchased the farm in 1990, they have cash cropped the land, which now totals 120 acres.

Carl started a used car dealership in 1986 at which time he was raising springing Holstein heifers on his original farm. The dealership, called Golden Sands Auto, is located on County M adjacent to the farm where their barn quilt is displayed.

The barn quilt was painted by the Shawano County barn quilt committee and was put on display by Bruce Teetzen and Jerry Timm 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 via email at jamesmleuenberger@yahoo.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.