

County's 319th Barn Quilt Highlights Family's Nine Children

Shawano County's 319th barn quilt is now displayed on a beautiful barn on an eight-acre farm owned by Lee and Karen Ullmer, N1866 Green Valley Road, Pulaski. The quilt was sponsored by the Pulaski office of Premier Community Bank. Branch manager Laurie Baranczyk said it was an honor for the bank to sponsor the quilt for the Ullmers. "It's wonderful to be part of the Shawano County community's amazing display of beautiful barn quilts," Baranczyk said.

The barn quilt pattern the Ullmers selected features five red diamonds and four blue diamonds, which represent the Ullmers' five girls and four boys. "Since the pattern represents our family so well, we simply named the quilt 'Our Nine'," Karen said. The barn the quilt is displayed on is over 100 years and has been beautifully maintained. Formerly a dairy barn, the majority of the barn has now been turned into an extensive wood-working shop for Lee's hobby. One stanchion has been kept, however, as a remembrance of days gone by.

The farm land in the area was first purchased by the State of Wisconsin from the U.S. government in 1854. Since then, the farm has had nine owners. In 1984, Damon and Shirley Szymanski purchased the farm from the well-known Pulaski area Polish family John and Bernice Smurawa. The Ullmers purchased eight acres of the original 80-acre farm from Damon and Shirley on July 3, 1984. "We thank God for what we believe was the perfect place to raise our nine children," Lee said.

Roadside Shrines

A unique feature of the beautiful Ullmer farmstead is its roadside shrine along with several other shrines on the barn and house. In 1969, Lee had the opportunity to tour Northern Europe on a farm/cheese-making tour. While traveling through Southern Germany in the Bavaria countryside, Lee noticed many shrines along the roadways, paths and on buildings which made a lasting impression on him.

After Lee and Karen purchased their farm near Pulaski, Lee remembered his trip to Europe and the shrines he had seen. "After talking with Damon about his many trips to Poland where he saw many roadside shrines, Karen and I thought it would be nice to do our part and make our eight acres like the cherished memories of the simple religious life of the people from our homelands," Lee said.

"I think the purpose of these little shrines is to lift our hearts and minds upward to heaven, to think about God and the saints, and to thank them for what we have and to appreciate the graces and blessings God gives our country and our families," Lee added.

The Ullmer barn quilt was painted by the Shawano County barn quilt committee and was put on display by LeRoy and Keith Raddant of Raddant Electric in Shawano.