

Shawano County's 201st Barn Quilt is a Family Tree

Shawano County's 201st barn quilt is in the Town of Waukechon on the Lorin and Winnie Preston farm at W7124 St. John's Church Road. The quilt, called the Preston Family Tree, has an evergreen tree pattern composed of various geometric shapes. The design was a unanimous choice for the Prestons since they have been planting evergreen trees on their property for over 30 years. There are numerous pine plantations scattered over their 120 acre farm. "The plantings were originally designed to fund college educations for our children," Winnie said, "but the kids matured before the trees!"

One of the Prestons' favorite traditions has grown out of all the acres of evergreen trees. Beginning on Thanksgiving weekend each year, the Prestons open their farm to share Christmas trees with neighbors, family and friends. Families roam the hillsides looking for the perfect tree and then cut it themselves, making the adventure a family memory.

Lorin is into growing things, so pine trees aren't the only trees he raises. He also has a small apple orchard that provides a variety of apples to share with others each fall.

Lorin and Winnie have lived on their farm for 41 years. Having both been raised on small farms in western Wisconsin, they knew the country was a good place to raise a family. The four gold squares on the barn quilt represent their four children, Curt, Joy, Jill and Glen, who were born and raised on the farm. Now the Prestons' three grandchildren love to visit the farm and romp on the wide open spaces it provides.

The farm was originally purchased by Gustav Krause in 1886 and has been held mainly by generations of the Krause family through the years. In fact, the farm is the birthplace of County Board Supervisor, Robert Krause, of Bonduel. The Prestons purchased the farm from Robert Krause Sr. in 1972.

The barn on which the quilt is displayed is over 100 years old. It was originally designed to handle dairy cattle, but the Prestons converted it to house beef cattle soon after they purchased it. They raised beef cattle for about 12 years until their fourth child was born. At that point, they decided it was either the kids or the cows, so the cows had to go.

"During the years we raised cattle, we relied often on the help and advice of our neighbors," Lorin said. "One of our special blessings of living on the farm has been the wonderful neighbors we've had."

The Preston 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.

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.