

Christmas Trees featured on County's 214th and 215th Barn Quilts

Bill and Bev Heling have sponsored Shawano County's 214th and 215th barn quilts for their barn at W4033 Landstad Road south of Bonduel. Bev designed both quilts, with each having a tree or Christmas theme. Quilt number 214, with a single tree in the center surrounded by four barns, is called Christmas on the Farm. Number 215, with four barns, four trees and a star in the middle, is called Barn Dance Do-Si-Do, as a tribute to the barn dances held in the barn.

"Anyone who knows me knows I love trees and love to decorate my house at Christmastime, so it seemed logical that our two barn quilts would include trees in them," Bev said. "And to highlight our beautiful, nearly century old barn, I thought it would be nice to feature barns on the quilts as well."

Early owners of the farm were Gintz and Prunty families and the barn and house were built around 1917. Henry Habighorst and his wife purchased the property in 1926. Their son, Fred, was seven at the time. Fred married Freida Wegner in 1941 and they had a dairy farm and later a veal business.

Bill and Bev purchased seven acres and all the farm buildings from the Habighorsts in 1985, moving in a year later after doing some remodeling. In 1904, Bev's grandparents, William and Louisa Wagner, had purchased some land from the original farm and built a house and blacksmith shop. The granary was rebuilt in 1935 and a stone milkhouse added that same year. It was rebuilt and mortared by Bev in 1986.

In 1987, the barn's foundation deteriorated to the point that it had to be redone. The following year, Bill replaced the upstairs floor in the barn in preparation for a barn dance he and Bev were hosting to celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary. "Members of Immanuel Lutheran Church of Cicero had such a great time at the dance that they asked if we would host a church service there," Bev said. "So the next year we had a 'Big Red Barn' service with over 200 people in attendance."

The service was repeated in 1990, and over 500 people came! "We had a potluck downstairs, with 48 tables of food," Bev said. "We played old-fashioned games, gave rides in two Model A Fords and had a petting zoo, along with live music and dancing upstairs. It was a great time."

Other dances were held in the barn in 1993 to celebrate Bill and Bev's 35th wedding anniversary and another as a benefit for a new Lutheran high school. The barn is now used for storage and for Bev's annual "barn sale" of treasures. No cattle have been in the barn since 1961, but it has been beautifully restored and is a great showcase for the two barn quilts.

Also noteworthy about barn quilt 214 are the symbols in each corner. The treble clef represents the 52 years Bev has taught piano, including 43 years as the music teacher at Pulaski High School. And the airplane represents the more than 50 years Bill has been a pilot. Bill had a private flying business for many years, taught hundreds of people to fly, served as manager of several airports and even spent time in Alaska flying fishermen into the lakes. "He pretty much knows everything about airplanes," Bev said, "and he can tell you what kind of a plane might be flying overhead just by the sound of the engine."

The Heling barn quilts were painted by the Shawano County barn quilt committee and were 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 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 of Commerce 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.