

Multi-Colored Tree is County's 254th Barn Quilt

Mike and Janice Van De Yacht have Shawano County's 254th barn quilt...a beautiful, multi-colored tree encircled in the colors of the sunset...displayed on their century-old barn at N2769 Valley Road, Bonduel. The quilt was actually a birthday present for Mike's 60th birthday from his and Janice's four children, Traci, Tommy, Willis and Abigail. "We wanted to make sure the pattern we picked out looked like a quilt," Mike said, "and Janice and I couldn't be happier with how it turned out. We just love the color combination and think it looks great."

Mike and Janice had seen other quilts in Shawano County and knew one would look good on their barn as well. But the night they met with project coordinator Jim Leuenberger to pick out a pattern was one they will never forget. It was last August 21st, the night a tornado hit the Shawano area just as the three were meeting to look at quilt patterns at the Shawano Chamber of Commerce. As the skies darkened and the winds picked up around 7:00 p.m., Leuenberger thought it might be time to head home. Mike and Janice got home safely, but Leuenberger drove across the Wolf River Bridge during the height of the storm, barely making it to his home on Wolf River Road. "I was never so scared in my life," he said, "and was very relieved to get home, even though we were without electricity for the next 18 hours."

Farm Homesteaded in 1900

The farm on which the barn quilt is located was homesteaded in 1900 by Albert Pludeman, who farmed about 80 acres and had a dairy herd of about 15 cows and a few heifers. His son, Henry, later took over the farm and was joined by his son, Leon, who still lives in Bonduel. Leon has three sisters, the oldest, Elaine, being 20 years older than the youngest. "Being the oldest, I had a chance to help with my younger siblings," Elaine, who lives in Menasha, said. "And even though we didn't get electricity until the 1940s, we still had lots of fun." When she was very young, Elaine actually lived in their log home with her parents, two aunts and an uncle. "It was pretty cozy," she said.

The farm was in the Pludeman name until Leon decided to sell the farm after his mother, Esther, died about ten years ago. Mike lived near Isaar most of his life but when he heard from Leon's sister, Janet, that the farm was for sale, he and Janice thought it would be a great place for them. They purchased it in 2007. The farm has always been known as Rocky Valley Farm, so the barn quilt has been named Sunset in Rocky Valley.

Mike and Janice are in the process of remodeling the house, incorporating the original log home in the design. The house was built in 1900 and the barn in 1907. The 100-foot by 40-foot barn never had electricity, but a new roof was added and parts of the foundation redone. Plans are to have the barn painted as well. The barn is being used for storage, but little has been changed on the inside, so it looks pretty much like it has for many decades.

The Van De Yacht barn quilt was painted by the Shawano County barn quilt committee and was put on display by LeRoy Raddant and Bruce Teetzen of Raddant Electric in Shawano.

Anyone in Shawano County 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.

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