

Sperberg Barn Quilt is Number 301

The Sperberg Family Dairy Farm, owned by Craig and Brandi (Lowry) Sperberg at N7197 Box Elder Road, Shawano, located in the Township of Richmond, is the home of Shawano County's 301st barn quilt. Craig's grandparents, Eldor and Norma Martzke, former owners of the farm, sponsored the quilt. The barn quilt pattern they chose started as a sketch by Craig and includes a Holstein cow, since dairy cows have been the primary livestock raised on the farm through five generations since the late 1800s. They call their barn quilt pattern: Got dairy? Commenting on the quilt, Craig said, "I think it looks just amazing!"

The farm was homesteaded by Craig's great-great grandfather Frederich Martzke in 1891. The second generation to operate the farm from 1920 to 1952 was Theodore and Alma (Lindner) Martzke. Most of the farm work during this era was done with horses and horse drawn machinery. Craig's grandparents, Eldor and Norma (Buettner) Martzke, were the third generation to own and operate the farm from 1952 until 1988. In 2003, Craig purchased the farm from his Uncle, Mike Martzke. Mike and his wife Karen (Gumaer) owned the farm from 1988 to 2003, the fourth generation to do so.

Frederich Martzke came to the United States from Augsburg, Germany in 1887, journeying to Wisconsin where other family members had settled. He purchased the land at the age of 23 and started clearing it for farming with his wife, Marie (Roggenbach). The first barn (referred to in later years as the grain barn) was built in 1899. It still stands today and is used for housing heifers and storing hay.

Holstein dairy cattle have always been the primary livestock on the farm, although there have also been Angus and Hereford beef cattle, pigs, chickens and work horses through the years. The first tractor purchased in the late '40s was a Farmall H.

Craig and Brandi are the Fifth Generation to operate the family dairy farm. Their children, Emma, Brock and Baylee, are the sixth generation to live there. Craig and Brandi are expecting their fourth child in September. The farm totals 126 acres, but Craig also rents additional land to grow feed for his 40-cow Holstein dairy herd.

A number of improvements have been made to the farmstead, including removal of silos, remodeling the barn, and putting an addition on the barn to increase the number of stalls. Craig said, "I really enjoy farming and am proud to be keeping the family farm going."

The Sperberg 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.

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