

Cows and Trees Highlighted in County's 303rd Barn Quilt

Shawano County's 303rd barn quilt, called Bovines and Pines, is on a barn owned by Marge Gretzinger at N3967 County CC, Shawano. The quilt was sponsored by Shawano County UW-Extension agricultural agent Jamie Patton and her husband, Kirk, and son, Sawyer.

The farm was originally owned by J. and A. Simple from 1873-1882, followed by D.J. Jones from 1883-1884, Arthur Gibbs from 1885-1889 and Richard Gage from 1890-1915. Richard's wife sold the farm, then 55 acres, to Adolph and Anna Raddant in 1916, at which time it was valued at \$550.

Marge and her eventual husband, Frank, grew up next door to each other in Clintonville. He was a World War II veteran who served on the front lines as a medic and was awarded three battle stars. While he was in the service, he and Marge wrote to each other like "pen pals," Marge said. When he got out of the Army in 1947, they got married, at which time she was just 17 years old. They purchased the farm where Marge now lives in 1949.

Marge and Frank were married for 67 years and raised nine sons and two daughters. Frank died in 2011, at which time the farm had grown to 200 acres and the dairy herd to 75 milking cows. Marge's son, Donnie, and his wife, Melodee, now operate the farm along with two others across the road, bringing the total land operated to nearly 400 acres.

The milking herd was sold two years ago, but the heifers were kept, so Donnie might start milking again at some point.

Over the years, the Gretzingers have been very active in growing and selling Christmas trees. Marge's father-in-law was in the Christmas tree business near Crandon and the Gretzingers still maintain several tree plantations in the area.

Marge actually designed the barn quilt, which features a Holstein cow head in the center, representing the dairy herd on the farm. Also featured on the quilt are four pine trees, representing the many years the family has been in the Christmas tree business.

Commenting on why she and her family sponsored the barn quilt, Jamie Patton said, "Driving around Shawano County two years ago while interviewing for jobs in the area, we were struck by the sheer number of quilts. Although we had lived in farming communities in Iowa and Missouri, we had never seen so many bright, cheerful quilts in one location, nor such well-kept, historic barns. On an emotional level, the quilts made the county feel cozy and welcoming. The sheer extent of the project told us this was a community-oriented area, which really appealed to us.

"Our five-year-old son loves to drive around the county and find the quilts. We don't personally have a barn, so being able to drive by the Gretzinger farm and see the quilt we sponsored really tickles him. I guess in its own way, the quilt is a simple way to begin to develop our family's roots and our connections to our new home."

The Gretzinger 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 along with Dan Cerveny of Dan Cerveny Construction, also of Shawano.