

Springvale Farm

Brian and Janine Ruff

Clover 4-H Club made this barn quilt for Brian and Janine Ruff because of their endless contributions to the 4-H Program of Buffalo County, and for Brian & Janine's love for farming and quilting. The interview was given by Janine Ruff.

Springvale Farm is located just north of Alma, WI at S1485 Spring Creek Road. The abstract for the farm dates back to 1855. Brains' grandparents, George and Nora Ruff bought the farm in 1939 from Frank Spooner. George sold the farm to his son Merlyn Ruff in 1948. Merlyn and his wife Jennet farmed there until 1976 when the farm was sold to his son Brain. Brian and wife Janine continue to run the family farm to this day with some help from their son Josh Ruff.

The original barn, (located behind the house) was built in 1910 by William Ristow. It is a post and frame hipped roof barn with a stone foundation. The foundation is unique as it has an outside stone wall and an inside stone wall with a layer of gravel and smaller stones in between. The original barn is 66 feet long and 36 feet wide. It consisted of 4 horse stalls, a calf pen, and 24 small stalls for Jersey cows. The milk house next to the barn was added in the early 1940's by George Ruff. Between the years of 1954-1956 Merlyn Ruff added a breezeway between the barn and the milk house, installed a 300 gallon bulk tank and updated the inside to hold 28 Holstein cows. In 1966 a barn cleaner was added and the pitch fork was retired.

In 1976, we started farming with the 28 cow stall barn. We carried the milk to the milk house in stainless steel 4 gallon milk pails and then poured them into strainers on the bulk tank. In 1977 we purchased a Step Saver milking system and in 1978 we installed a Conde pipeline. In 1979 we built a 40 foot addition to the north end of the barn and added 12 tie stalls for a total of 40 cows and 2 calf pens. In 1991, we installed a Surge pipeline, removed the calf pen and added 8 more stalls, for a total of 48. In 2008 we remodeled again and installed a one sided pit parlor in the original barn and calf pens in the newer addition. We now milk between 45-50 cows. This barn has been in use as a milking barn for just over 100 years and is still functioning in its original purpose.

In the summer of 2014 the barn that this quilt is located on was built to accommodate young stock and to store hay and some equipment.

An interesting story was told to us by my great-uncle and godfather, Ingwald Paulson. Prohibition in the United States was from 1920-1933. During this time the farm was owned by Frank Spooner and his wife. Frank and a neighbor by the name of Ray Wibel had a Moonshine Still in the coulee behind the Wibel's farm. This was the era when barn dances were a favorite. My Uncle "Ing," played a portable pump organ, my grandpa Edwin Reinhart played a button accordion, and they belonged to a band that played at the barn dances here. Millie Benjamin, who taught at Alma for many years, was also known to play for these dances. At this time there was a grain bin located in the hay mow and this was used by the band members as a stage. Of course during these dances, Frank and Ray would share their moonshine.

Another story shared was that at one time there was a small cheese factory located across the road where the new barn sits and the cow lane is located. There is a building foundation at that site.

Brian was a member of the Lads and Lassies 4-H Club for 4 or 5 years. One of his favorite memories was the skating parties at the Ken Seifert farm in Deer Creek. I was a member of the Sisson 4-H Club for

3 years. My favorite memory is the fun I had at our meetings. I was a 4-H Leader in Buffalo county for the Lucky Rainbow 4-H Club for about 10 years when my kids (Josh and Amber) were in 4-H. I enjoyed all the projects they did and helping them at the Buffalo County Fair.

Buffalo County has the most beautiful landscape in the country. We have four seasons, which is spectacular with our river valley, beautiful bluffs and woodlands. When I was younger, I always wanted to travel and my Dad always said” Why would you want to see anything else when we live in the most beautiful part of the country”.

I have enjoyed quilting for many years. I’ve been interested in the barn quilts since I read an article about them a few years ago. I have always wanted to make one myself, but having the Clover 4-H Club make one for us is just wonderful. We love to look out the door in the morning and see the beautiful colors of the quilt on our barn. Thank you Clover 4-H Club.

