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Barn quilt going up Tuesday on old structure

BY LYN JERDE, DAILY REGISTER

On Tuesday, Columbia County's newest barn quilt will go up on one of the county's oldest barns.

The red and white painted barn, built in 1886, is on a farm near Columbus that has been in the same family for 152 years.

Doris Hughes, 95, of Columbus, is the granddaughter of Fred Duborg, who acquired the farm in 1860. She owns the farm, which is now rented.

Barn quilts are painted plywood murals, depicting vintage or contemporary quilt patterns, which are mounted to barns so as to be visible to passers-by.

Patti Herman, family living coordinator of the University of Wisconsin-Extension of Columbia County, said the Columbia County Association for Home and Community Education coordinates the county's barn quilt project, which so far has resulted in 22 quilts being affixed throughout the county.

There are five more barns, including the one on the Hughes farm, where quilts are expected to be displayed soon, she said.

Choosing a pattern for the barn quilt was a matter of intense family discussion, Hughes said.

Family members agreed on a quilt depicting Indian corn, partly because there, near the barn, mounds were built by people who inhabited what is now Columbia County thousands of years before European explorers and settlers arrived.

"I thought Indian corn represented our history better than anything else," Hughes said.

Weather permitting, the barn quilt will be affixed to the barn, located near county Highways K and A, on Tuesday morning.

Hughes noted that there is an older barn on the farm — which, she said, was one of the first in Wisconsin to benefit from rural electrification, after her father, Rudolph Duborg, dammed the Crawfish River to generate power.

The application form for barn quilts asks for information like this about every barn for which a quilt is requested — who originally acquired the farm, how long it's been in the family, when the barn was built, and what the barn is used for now. (The barn on the Hughes farm is used for equipment storage.)

The purpose of the barn quilt project (and similar projects in other Wisconsin counties) is to preserve and honor the county's agricultural heritage, and to offer an opportunity for artistic expression.

Anyone who wants a barn quilt may find an application form online at columbia.uwex.edu/files/2011/06/Application.pdf, or at the Extension office at the Columbia County Annex, 120 W. Conant St.

Barns that are chosen for quilts typically are sturdy, well-kept and readily visible from a road that is well-kept in all seasons.

Each barn quilt costs $250, and sponsorships are available.

Herman said there's an ongoing project to create an online interactive map of all Columbia County barn quilts, so that people can find out not only the location, but also the quilt pattern and history of the farm, by clicking on the site. The Extension is working with the county's land information office to complete the project.

"I think this can be a great thing for tourism in the county," Herman said.