

Woodbury Heritage Group Aims to Save **HISTORIC BARN**

By Leah Noel

Many of Woodbury's residents—especially those living in Stonemill Farms, Dancing Waters, Bailey's Arbor and Ridgestone—are new to the area, even the state, and don't know much about the city's deep agricultural roots. That's a big reason why the Woodbury Heritage Society wants to preserve the historic Miller Barn, north of Valley Creek Road between Settlers Ridge and Manning Avenue.

The barn, completed in 1922, sits on a 60-acre site with an adjoining 100 acres of open space, which has been designated by the city as a future park. The heritage society hopes the grounds could be developed to not only preserve the barn, but to have it include a historical interpretive center, open fields where demonstrations of early farming machinery could be held, an amphitheater or outdoor seating area for community events, picnic grounds and a historic-themed walking trail. The heritage society is working with city officials in the hopes the site could someday become that.

"This is one of the last historic barns left in the area," says Joyce Flynn, a Woodbury Heritage Society member who is leading up



Courtesy of Barb and Ralph Jankovich, the last family to farm the Miller farmstead



Courtesy of Colleen Davis Photography of Woodbury



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fundraising efforts for the project. “It is part of the rich agricultural history of Woodbury and could be used to inform residents and future generations about the area’s founding families, many of whom still have ancestors living here. We also like the fact that by learning about farm life, where families and farmers worked together, you can see how it takes a community to make a community work.”

Inez Oehlke, who passed away September 5 at age 96 and was a long-time Woodbury civic and historical activist, was a big time backer of the project. She was raised on a Washington County farm and married Glen Oehlke in 1947, moving to his family farm where now Woodbury Drive and Bailey Road intersect. “She especially wanted children to know about the beautiful history Woodbury has,” says close friend Margaret Wachholz. “This project was definitely her vision.”

Last month, the Woodbury Heritage Society received a report detailing what structural and engineering repairs the barn needs to be restored. Once the group and the city agree to plans for the site, the Woodbury Heritage Society plans to kick off a three-phase fundraising campaign, with the goal of \$500,000 in donations. When about \$70,000 is raised, the group wants to replace the barn’s existing roof and siding. The next step would be to raise about \$332,000 to turn the barn into a mini museum and develop the surrounding property into a heritage park. Lastly, the group wants to raise \$100,000 to create an endowment for the site so its upkeep and operation could be self-funded.

The barn was built by German immigrant August Miller and has been evaluated by the Minnesota History Center as a good example of a wood-frame barn from that era. “When you look at it closely from the inside, you’ll see wooden pegs that join the beams together,” says Wayne Schilling, Woodbury Heritage Society president. “You just don’t see structures built like that anymore.”

For those interested in helping the group fundraise and raise awareness about the barn restoration, Bill Schrankler, the vice president of the



Courtesy of Woodbury Heritage Society

Woodbury Heritage Society, says there are many ways to get involved, everything from giving donations, helping with public relations, stuffing envelopes, and connecting with local schools to find ways children can help raise money save this barn.

If interested in joining Woodbury Heritage Society or its volunteering opportunities, visit www.woodburyheritage.org. Donations to the to Save the Miller Barn campaign can be made online at the Woodbury Community Foundation’s website (www.woodburyfoundation.org, click on “donate”, then “legacy giving,” then “Woodbury Heritage Society”) or mailed to the Woodbury Heritage Society (8301 Valley Creek Rd., Woodbury, MN 55125). All gifts are tax deductible.

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