



By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

Bea Bauerle has long been known in the area for her quilting skills, classes and shows. Now, she's moved into a new medium to display her love of quilts.

Bauerle, aided by family and friends, has "hung" five quilts on the family farm southwest of Imperial.

The quilts are made of four by four plywood. Bauerle spreads on a base coat of white, then draws quilt block designs to scale. She chose red and blue outdoor paint to paint the blocks.

She has a nine-patch, a pinwheel, a four-patch standing on point and a block within a block, as well as a wrought iron block that looks like a black and white patch against one building.

"I picked the ones I kind of liked," she commented. "I wanted something big to hang outside."

Bauerle said she got the idea for the project when she and her daughters were on a trip through Amish country in Iowa several years ago, and noticed colorful barn quilts.

"I thought that would be fun to do and to put on my buildings," she said.

Barn quilts can be traced back almost 300 years to when immigrants from the central part of Europe, such as Germany, Austria and the Netherlands, arrived in America.

It's widely believed that barn painting/quilting originated in Pennsylvania, then spread to New England and the midwestern states.

The barn quilts were used, in part, as directions for finding farms. Bauerle said she does indeed use her barn quilts to tell visitors where to turn into the farm she and husband Don live on.

By the beginning of the 20th century the colorful blocks were fading away, giving place to advertisements on barns.

There's recently been a revival of the art, and quilt trails have been developed in many states.

A National Quilt Trail has already spread from New York to Georgia. There are well over 400 quilt squares installed on barns, floodwalls, sheds and other significant community structures.

As a matter of fact, Bauerle plans to drive to Pender, Neb. some day, where over 125 barn quilts were hung to celebrate that town's Q125 celebration. A barn quilt tour is available in Pender.

Bauerle thinks the Imperial area could support barn quilts.

"I'd like to see some other people do it. It wouldn't necessarily have to be on barns because we don't have the big barns like in the east," she explained. "You could put them on your house or garage."

Bauerle added that she has friends in a quilt guild in McCook who are hanging them on garages.

Does she have any more quilt block ideas for more barn quilts? "I still have a few buildings I can put them on," she laughed.