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100-year-old barn restored to former glory

After downsizing, reconstructing and stabilizing, the 100-year-old barn that can be seen from Walton Boulevard is ready to relive its glory days.

Previously used for storing hay, the Meadow Brook barn was once accompanied by a larger barn that housed sheep.

In 1935, Matilda Dodge Wilson added onto her 350 acres of land, increasing her estate to nearly 1,500 acres. The barns were dismantled and relocated to the current location on Meadow Brook Road.

With roughly 10 barns on the land, these two were built the strongest, according to Kimberly Zelinski, Director of Museum Operations and Advancement at Meadow Brook Hall.

In 2012, the two remaining barns were brought into discussion for renovation and restoration. By 2014, the renovation project was underway — but only for one of the barns. Because the sheep barn was in worse condition, it was torn down and efforts were focused on the barn that stands today.

For cost purposes, tearing down one barn while properly restoring the other was the logical choice, according to Terry Stollsteimer, associate vice president of facilities management.

“In the end, it was the right decision to take down the larger barn,” he said.

Over the years, the Meadow Brook barn had tilted on a 15 degree angle. Facilities management straightened its posture and repurposed the usable timbers to rebuild and restructure.

With its recent renovations and proper upkeep, the barn has potential to see a long future, said Richard Stamps, retired Associate Professor of Anthropology.

“The barn stood for 100 years,” he said. “If it’s kept up on, we could see it standing for another 100 years.”

Though no decision has been made yet, the barn will most likely be used for storage, Stollsteimer said.

Wilson’s hay barn has seen its final renovations after being painted bright yellow and stamped with the large words “Oakland University” on the side. Though they originated in a dark red color, they were painted pale yellow shortly afterwards. The bright paint color should fade over time to be reminiscent of its look from earlier years.





The hay barn in present day. Bottom photo shows the loft.



Hay barn



Sheep barn

- Historic photos courtesy of Meadow Brook Archives.