

History of Bruentrup Heritage Farm

In 1891, German emigrant William Bruentrup married Ida Wagner and the bride's family gave them 40 acres of farm land along White Bear Avenue (just south of today's Lydia Avenue) as a wedding present. The barn was built in 1905 and the original house was enlarged to two stories in 1912. A granary, silo, machine shed, maintenance shed, chicken coop, brooder house, windmill and smokehouse were also added. They expanded their acreage to 175 acres and built a successful dairy farm with 20 milk cows, 1 bull, 6 work horses, 100 chickens and a number of hogs.

After World War II, the surrounding area grew rapidly as veterans returned from the war to start families. This demand for houses, better roads and more retail stores led to increased land prices and property taxes. It became more difficult for the Bruentrups to earn a living from farming and they gradually began selling small parcels of land to developers. Some of this land was used to construct Maplewood Mall. In 1998, a developer offered a very good price for the remaining 6 acres if the buildings were removed. The Bruentrups offered to sell the buildings to the City of Maplewood and a survey showed the citizens were in favor. But the City decided not to raise the funds.

The Maplewood Area Historical Society then approached the Bruentrups about donating the buildings to the Society. With the aid of donations from the Bruentrups, private citizens, local businesses and a grant from the State legislature, enough funds were obtained to move five of the buildings and the windmill to 2 ½ acres of City-owned Open Space land in 1999. The milk house and chicken house could not be moved but were recreated to look like the originals. Because of this "grass-roots" effort to relocate the Farm buildings, the Bruentrup Heritage Farm received a Special Nomination in 2000 from the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota.

But the buildings required restrooms, handicap access and fire sprinklers to meet the building code before they could be opened to the public. In 2006, another grant was obtained from the Minnesota Historical Society and with much labor donated by volunteers and the local building trades; the work was completed in 2010.

Since then, a gazebo and a new building to display the farm equipment have been constructed. An exhibit in the milk house discusses dairy farming in the 1945 - 1960 era and includes milking equipment, milk cans and other artifacts.

The buildings are also home to the Maplewood Area Historical Society where meetings are held, artifacts are stored and visitors can view exhibits on Maplewood's history. If you wish to visit the Farm, please check our Events listing to see what days the buildings are open to the public.