

Southwest metro

[DEPARTMENT]
**THEN
AND
NOW**

BY
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PHOTOS BY
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A peek inside the historic Goodrich-Ramus barn, courtesy of the eclectic tastes of Steve Schussler.



barn wasn't as smooth sailing as it may seem. While Schussler was the only official bidder on the property when Hennepin County put it up for sale in 2010, he believes there were many other interested buyers hoping to save the barn that were simply scared away by all of the regulations and restrictions associated with the nearby airport and roadway and historic preservation groups at the local, state and potentially national levels. But Schussler had the experience, means and desire to tackle the project.

The county had acquired the property from its previous owner in 2007 with plans to replace the barn with a drainage pond to accommodate the expansion of Pioneer Trail, but that course of action was rerouted when it was discovered that the barn might qualify as a historical site worth preserving. Schussler first read about the barn in a series of newspaper articles around the time it came up for sale, and he quickly became fascinated with its story. "I couldn't believe something that looked so cool in the papers had no bidders," he says. "I had a feeling it was a diamond in the rough."

With a shiny new roof and picture-frame-like fence, passersby are taking notice of the spruced-up barn's potential. Schussler says his team receives about 10 phone calls a week from people wishing to rent the space for weddings and the like. He hopes there will be an opportunity to open the barn for that type of use in the future. He also finds joy in the letters from people thanking him for the work he's done on the barn or when commuters stop to take photos of the peculiar lawn ornaments. "There's so much rich history there," Schussler says. //

Heritage and Humor

A local businessman preserves a historical Eden Prairie barn with tender loving care and a splash of panache.

EVEN WITH RECENT UPDATES TO PIONEER TRAIL southwest metro residents are accustomed to seeing a few familiar sights along the scenic east-west drive through the southern part of Eden Prairie: Flying Cloud Airport, with its extra-large hangars and old war planes; Staring Lake Park, with its vibrant outdoor recreation areas and quiet lake; and the historic Goodrich-Ramus barn, with its classic gothic roof and prairie-like setting.

But something unexpected has cropped up along the roadside recently, something that certainly catches the eyes of passersby. The old barn has some new residents in the form of cow sculptures outfitted with bright paint to look like a U.S.A. basketball player, a suit-wearing boss, a pinstriped baseball player and more.

The creative culprit behind this quirky display is the barn's new owner, Steve Schussler, founder of Schussler Creative, Inc., and mastermind of

Rainforest Café, Galaxy Drive-In and other themed restaurants around the Twin Cities and beyond. "Everything I do has a sense of whimsicality," Schussler says, adding that purchasing and repurposing the treasured structure, which was originally designed to be a cow barn back in the 1940s, was simply a natural fit for his business.

After an extensive remodel that included a new insulated roof, interior and exterior lighting, an irrigation system for the lawn, repairs to the tuck-point bricks, fresh paint, replacing windows and rotted boards, adding a white fence to protect the property (and corral those cows) and much more, Schussler has transformed the barn into what he calls a creative laboratory for employees to dream up and store theatrical props and to showcase ideas and themes to clients—not to mention make Pioneer Trail travelers smile.

But the process of purchasing and fixing up the