

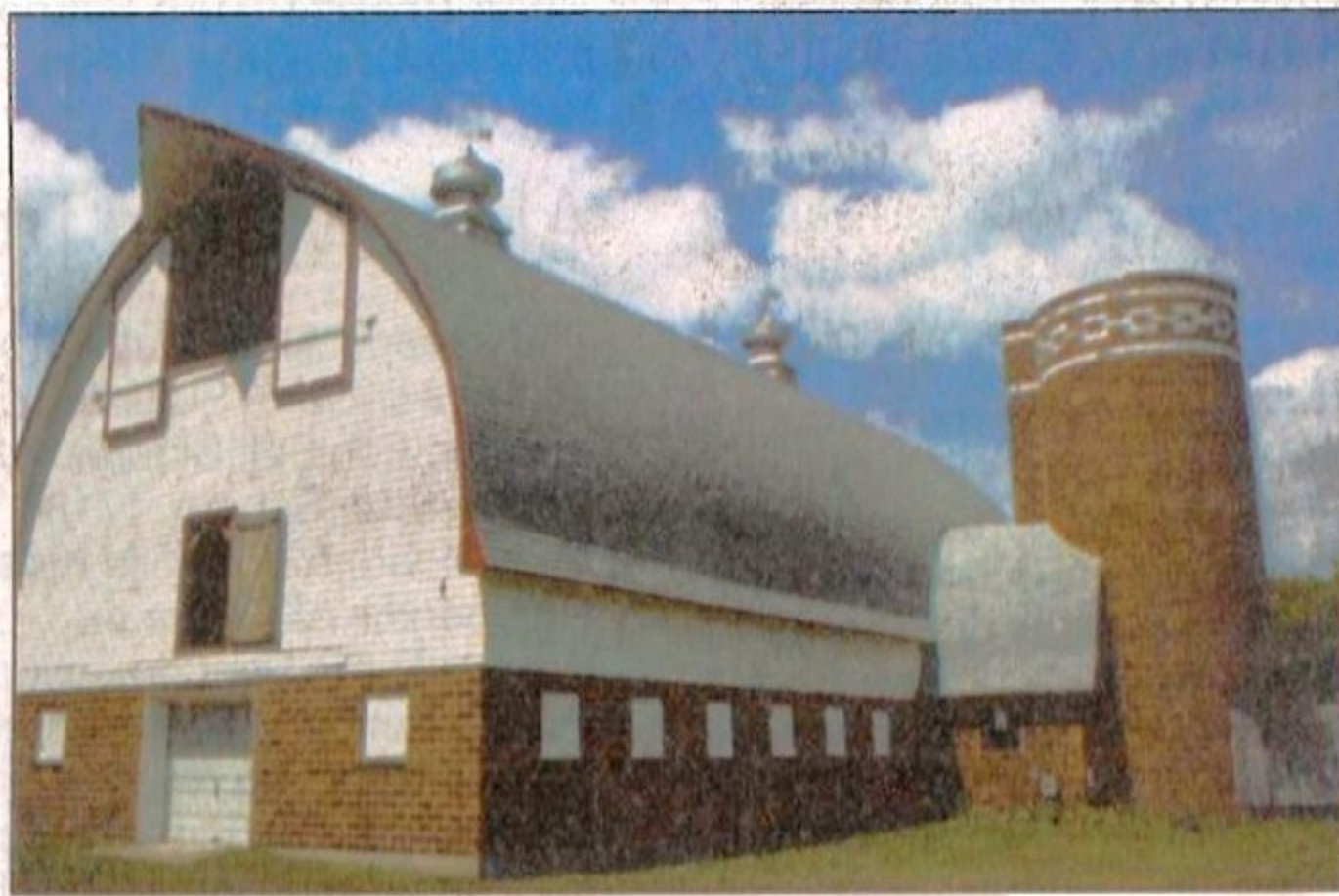
# Eden Prairie NEWS

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FILE PHOTO  
The Goodrich Ramus Barn, located on Pioneer Trail, may end up as an office space for Golden Valley-based Schussler Creative.

## Barn may house 'creative laboratory'

Business behind Rainforest Café and Galaxy Drive-In plans to set up shop in Goodrich-Ramus Barn

By Leah Shaffer

A historic Eden Prairie barn may get another life as a "creative laboratory," for a Twin Cities firm known for creating theatrical restaurant concepts.

Hennepin County put the Goodrich-Ramus Barn up for bid this month and, as of last week, had received one bid. That bid, of \$82,000, came in from Steven Schussler, CEO of Schussler Creative Inc.

The county has awarded the contract to Schussler. Had no bids come in, the barn, located on 14150 Pioneer Trail, would have been dismantled.

"I'm going to use it as one of our creative laboratories," Schussler said Tuesday.

Schussler Creative is "in the business of creating attractions, restaurants and retail stores around the world," he said. The company is behind such concepts as the Rainforest Café, T-Rex at Disney World, and more locally, the Galaxy Drive-In at St. Louis Park.

The barn would not end up as a public space, but rather as a laboratory for Schussler. It could be used to house the large props and models connected to the company's work.

"Our idea with the barn is to No. 1, make it look good and preserve it," said Schussler.

The business plans to clean up the landscaping and "make sure that it becomes something that the Histori-

## Barn

Continued from front

cal Society and the rest of the people of Eden Prairie are proud of," he added.

### Farming history

The picturesque Goodrich Ramus barn has been a notable landmark of Pioneer Trail for years. It was originally constructed in 1942 and remains a "well-preserved example of a gothic roof barn built with glued-laminated rafters," according to county documents. The barn belonged first to the Goodrich family, then to Clarence and Dortha Ramus, in the early 1960s. More recently, it belonged to the Sjostrand family, who had to sell the property when the county took the land through eminent domain action in 2007. The entire site, which included a farmhouse, fields and the barn, was originally intended to make way for a stormwater pond required for the expansion of Pioneer Trail. However, in 2008, the county was

required to preserve the barn after both MnDOT and the State Historic Preservation Office determined the barn could qualify for the National Register of Historic Places.

Today, as Pioneer Trail expansion work finishes up, the barn has remained, currently surrounded by construction equipment and the stormwater pond.

If Schussler's bid is accepted by the county, the barn would not end up being open to the public. Due to the space left on the property, there are limited options for public use of the facility.

Schussler plans to use the barn as a space where he could illustrate his ideas to potential clients, something that goes on at his four other "creative laboratories" in Golden Valley.

Much of the work that may be housed in the space would be connected to promotion of Schussler's book "It's a Jungle in There," which comes out Oct. 5.

When asked why he picked the Goodrich-Ramus barn as a site, Schussler said he always liked barns.

"It's unusual, it needed to

be saved," he added. "We like taking unusual spaces and unusual things and giving back to the community. It's part of what we do."

Eden Prairie Historical Society President Kathie Case was relieved to hear of the possibility that the barn would be saved and put to use.

"I'm all about saving historic sites, but it's especially important when we put them to use," she said.

Dunn Bros. is the perfect example of a historic site that is used and enjoyed every day because of a business that's in there, said Case.

"This sounds like a wonderful plan," she said about Schussler's bid.

Case has fielded calls from people concerned about the fate of the barn.

"I was really worried about it and it really is a piece of historic landscape that is so important when you're driving down Pioneer Trail," she noted.

Schussler said they want to be good stewards of the property.

"It's there and there's a new chapter and we're really excited about it," he said.