



Anne Weinlader Donovan & Robert M. Donovan

5321 W 8000S Road
Chebanse, IL 60922

Quilt Block: North Star

Original Owners and/or Builders: Farm has been in the family for more than 100 years. Christian Weinlader, grandfather of the current owner, purchased the land around the turn of the century.

Age of Barn: As far as we know, the barn was built prior to the Weinlader purchase.

Original Use or Purpose of Structure: As far as living family members can remember, it has been used for hay storage and farm animal accommodations, primarily cattle. Currently, it is used for implement storage. The haymow will begin to be used as an artist loft in the summer of 2009.

Materials and Architecture: It is of wood and tin construction. Since the barn is of a style consistent with those constructed in Kankakee County in its era, we can only assume that the architecture was determined by standard family farm function and tradition.

History of Barn and/or Farm: As a child, Anne was told that when the railroad was to be built, the federal government awarded sections of land to the owners/builders of the railroad in a checkerboard pattern surrounding the railroad. The Weinlader farm was part of this land. The railroad entrepreneurs sold the land to an intermediary who held ownership for one day and then sold the land to the Knittel family from whom Christian Weinlader purchased it. Therefore, there have only been two families to hold long-term ownership of this property.

Christian Weinlader owned this farm while he was still a single man. He rented the house to the Brueggert family and subsequently married their daughter, Ida, who was many years younger. Christian lived only a few years after he married Ida but owned 320 acres by the time he died – 160 at this location; 90 in Milks Grove (Iroquois County); and 80 just south of Irwin. He had arranged before he died, to have “80 acres” for each child. The farms were held in trust until the youngest child came of age and then distributed to the four Weinlander children. Interestingly, and quite unusual for the times in which he lived, he had arranged 80 acres for each of his two daughters, as well as, each of his two sons. Even more interesting, it is three granddaughters who retain family ownership in those farms that are still “in the family.”

Quilt Block History – North Star

This pattern is believed to have originated as part of the “Secret Code” of quilts that helped escaping slaves find their way to freedom. The *North Star* is one of 10 patterns used to pass along instructions by draping the quilt over a porch rail or clothesline. The message conveyed to “proceed north by night” following the North Star.