

## Local family joins with agricultural, heritage societies to preserve heritage barn

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After years of discussions, a local piece of rural and agricultural history is set to be moved and preserved for the benefit of future generations.

A heritage barn, owned by the Gobeil family and located just northwest of Beaumont, is to be relocated to the grounds of the Beaumont and District Agricultural Society (BADAS) after the family, BADAS and the Beaumont and District Heritage Society all signed a memorandum of understanding at a Monday, Jan. 5 meeting.

The signing formalized years of discussion around relocating the barn, which stretch back as far as 10 years according to Gobeil family member Adelle Madu.

"It's been a long time talking about it, but it feels good that it's finally going to go ahead," Madu said.

Madu is the daughter of Dollard and Regina Gobeil. Dollard has passed away, but Madu says Regina, as well as her siblings, approve of the move.

She said the rapid development of rural land in the area, between Beaumont and Edmonton, gave her family motivation to act on preserving one small part of the land's heritage.

"Developers are buying all around us, so as soon as my mom sells the remaining land she has there, that whole yard is gone. The barn will be bulldozed down and hauled to the dump," she said. "It was farm people

that started Beaumont and kept it going... And now, all our neighbours, their yards are gone."

The barn is a long, two-story structure with an attic used for years primarily for cattle.

It was built in two sections, with the initial structure erected in the 1940s. Dollard added another section in 1957 as he was expanding his cattle operation, Madu said.

The barn has been on BADAS' radar for at least eight years, said BADAS president Jim Hiley, but recently moved off the backburner when the society abandoned its ag/recreation centre project.

Hiley said the barn has several valuable heritage aspects worthy of preservation and BADAS sees the barn as a future centrepiece of its fairgrounds west of the town.

"It's a signature project. There's a tremendous opportunity to visually portray to people what an ag society is all about when you see a nice big barn staring back at you, and it's also a heritage barn which the board really appreciated, because this is something that has been here a long, long time and really is part of the history of how this area was developed," Hiley said.

Since the barn won't be remaining on its original location it won't qualify for official heritage designation, but Hiley said its other "heritage qualities" still held value.

"It's very representative of the development of this area in the 40s and 50s and 60s. It's very identifiable, if people look back, as a visual record of the area," he said. "It's got those qualities that we call 'heritage.'"



Submitted by Grant Tolley

A side view of the Gobeil family barn.

The Beaumont and District Heritage Society will work to highlight the barn's place as representative of the area's history.

And the barn won't only serve as a sort of museum. Fun, hands-on uses, like barn dances, will be in the works.

Detailed planning is only beginning, and firm cost estimates, as well as plans for

inspecting and moving the barn, have not yet been investigated.

Hiley said even after the barn is moved major renovations will be needed before the public is allowed inside the structure. Timelines are also yet to be set, but both Madu and Hiley said they hope to have the barn moved within the next two years.