

Inspired by an Eden Prairie farm

Artist's painting of 'Ed's Place' will appear on calendar

By Karla Wennerstrom

In one corner of Eden Prairie's Golden Triangle is a homestead that doesn't seem to fit.

The distinctive silo, classic barn and farmhouse, as well as the hand-lettered sign pointing out the eggs for sale, stuck out enough that artist Rollie Brandt of Webster, Minn., was drawn to stop by.

Brandt was on her way to her freelance job, painting prototypes of figurines for Department 56.

"I've driven by it for six years," she said. "I'd go by it and think, 'I've got to paint this one!'"

"Even more than the beauty of the farm, she was intrigued by the fact that it stood the test of time and survived the urban sprawl all around it," she said in a news release. "I can only imagine the stories that homestead could tell."

In December, Brandt stopped by and met Ed Dvorak, the third generation to farm on the property. She said he greeted her in overalls with his farm dog.

Now "Ed's Place," her painting of Dvorak's Eden Prairie farm, is set to appear on the January page of her Lang 2010 "On the Farm" calendar.

"Little will people know looking at it peacefully nestled in new fallen snow that it is totally surrounded by office buildings and next to a busy suburban freeway! I think that's pretty fun!" Brandt wrote in a news release.

A lifelong artist, she has painted a variety of things like animals and landscapes - and has become nationally known for her paintings of "kids being kids" - but she is drawn to family farms.

"Out where I live, I see so many of them around me wherever I drive," she said. "I just think they're beautiful. ... I'm kind of a country girl anyway."

"The first one that intrigued me had vines on the silo and I thought it was beautiful," she said. "Then I noticed another one. Then I noticed another one. When the calendar company became interested, it just kind of snowballed."

"I hate to see these family farms go away and it's happening as the city spreads," she said.

The city is getting pretty close to "Ed's Place," as is obvious by the office park and highways that surround it.

Rollie Brandt holds her depiction of Ed Dvorak's farm.

Submitted photo



Dvorak, adding a log to the wood stove in the kitchen of his farmhouse, said he was born and raised in the 140-year-old house on Flying Cloud Drive. Today, Ed, 79, lives on the four-acre homestead with his sons.

His grandfather Edward came over to Ellis Island, then traveled by covered wagon to build the farm, he said.

Why did they choose this area, with its hills, valleys and swamps?

"Because it reminds me of our homeland," his grandpa told him. "This is why my grandpa settled here." His father Edwin built the silo in 1932, he said. The farm was part of a commu-

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Dvorak

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nity of Czechoslovakian farmers on the way to Hopkins. It was the raspberry capital of the world.

"It was a pleasure doing business with people," Dvorak reported. "All you needed to make a deal was a handshake, a good old-fashioned handshake."

Today, Dvorak is used to a lot of visitors buying eggs or just stopping to take photographs and bring their children to see the chicks.

"There's so many people that photograph that barn. It's unbelievable," Dvorak said, "right here in the midst of all these industrial buildings."

Every year Dvorak gets 100 new chicks. He offers eggs for sale, as well as vegetables and raspberries in the summer.

"I've been doing that for a

number of years," he said.

Dvorak reports that in the summer he works on the farm from about 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. "I want to stay here and finish out my life here."

"I think the calendar will be especially enjoyed by people here who know of this farm. ... I do hope the residents of Eden Prairie appreciate having this historic piece of Americana right in their midst," Brandt wrote.

Brandt also recently painted a farm on Texas Avenue in Prior Lake that's surrounded by homes.

"I've gotten to meet such neat people when I've gone in and introduced myself," she said. She always names the paintings after the farms' owners.

"Her husband's name was Nels," Brandt said of Diane Robertson of Prior Lake. "We call it Nels' place." Nels' Place will appear on a 2009 calendar.

Robertson said it was fun to have Brandt paint the farm.



A recent photo at Ed's place.

PHOTO BY KARLA WENNERSTROM

"It meant a lot," said Robertson, who no longer lives on the hobby farm. "She did a very nice job."

Of her farm, she said, "It was a good area to live ... I enjoyed that she painted it. [It

was] a really nice thing, a fond memory I'll miss it."

For more information on Brandt, visit www.rolliebrandt.com. Her work can also be found at www.wildwings.com.



Submitted photo

Brandt often hides the name of the farm owner or subject painted in her paintings. Ed's last name, Dvorak, is hidden in the fine branches of one of the trees, she said.

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