

Ariens unveils new outdoor venue in Brillion

By David Nordby
The Brillion News

BRILLION – Ariens Company Chairman and CEO Dan Ariens served as host as the company introduced its new glinting Stone Prairie outdoor venue on Center Road in Brillion last Thursday.

The new venue is under the company's new business division, Ariens-Co Hospitality.

The venue includes three buildings – a greenhouse and two structures that were first a barn and house. Each building has its own fireplace. The greenhouse was imported from Britain. Bathroom facilities were built on-site as a fourth standalone structure.

The venue was built on the site of the Schneider Family Farmstead. The family's history dates back to 1870, when they purchased the farm at the site on a land grant.

The Stone Prairie pavilions were built over the remaining foundations of the original farmhouse and barn.

Ariens had initially stumbled on the farm's ruins by chance.



Ariens Company's new outdoor venue, Stone Prairie, was shown off to the public last week. The venue is on Center Road built on the former Schneider Family Farmstead. The company also announced a conservation project will surround the venue and add to the existing trail system. (David Nordby/BN)

"There were literally 50 trees growing through the middle of (the barn building) and I saw these stone ruins, and thought, 'Well, wouldn't it be cool

if we could turn this into some place off our trail system – called Mike Ariens Trail – and have this a place for employees to come and have a picnic,"

Ariens recalled.

As they cleaned up the barn, they

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discovered the former home that existed on the site.

"Which I didn't even see because it was so buried in the trees," Ariens said.

When a member of the Schneider family helped install Wi-fi, Ariens learned more about the site's history.

"In the conversation about Wi-fi, Steve (Schneider) said, 'Hey, someday I want to come and talk to you about this property ... I don't know if you know it's back there but that's my great-grandfather's family homestead that was homesteaded in 1870.' So, here we are," Ariens said.

Schneider attended last week's ceremony, as did his uncle, Roger, a former Ariens employee.

"It really makes me proud and a little bit tickled to know that we have the story about the ruins," Ariens said.

The buildings have heated floors with heat lamps and special lighting.

"We'd like to get as many months in Wisconsin as we can. Together with the warm floor on your feet, the fireplace going, heat lamps going, and eventually we will drop curtains on the outside of this, we think we can get at least 10 months of activity," Ariens said.

Ariens used last week's event to announce that the company has put together a five-year conservation plan that will put another 100 acres of property under conservation management through the Ariens corpo-



Dan Ariens

rate office.

The total conservation project around Stone Prairie will be 150 acres with 4.5 miles of trails.

The project focuses on prairie, oak and savanna conservation, forested wetland restoration, and includes the development of a new trailhead.

"We build lawn mowers that take care of landscapes. We wanted an outdoor space that we could reflect both our product, our brand and the message that we're trying to talk about. The American backyard and how important it is to have real grass, real trees and take care of your turf as part of taking care of the nature around us," Ariens said.

Ariens says the company's mission is community driven, too.

"It's about our whole community and about how to make Brillion a really exciting great place to come and live, work and play," Ariens said.

As part of that effort, Cobblestone Creek will cater many events for the site.

"We intend to be a facility, an



Dan Ariens speaks to guests last Thursday inside one of the structures at Stone Prairie. (David Nordby/BN)

asset for both the company and the community," Ariens said.

As for citizens, the site's conservancy area connects to the community trails open to the public.

"We want people to explore the nature that surrounds us here in Brillion. One of the things that we have as an asset in Brillion is, we are rural, and rural is beautiful," Ariens said.

Dozens of community figure-

heads attended the ceremony including city officials Mayor Mel Edinger and Alderpersons Tim Hanson and Sarah Pielhop.

The company's newly formed Ariens hospitality group includes Ann Stilp, the director of the group, Elise

Ariens; Dan's daughter and Monica Ariens; Dan's daughter-in-law. The three work on business plans and sales for Stone Prairie, the Ariens Museum and Ariens Academy, and the project at Round Lake set to be completed in 2021.



The outdoor venue includes a greenhouse that was imported from Britain. Nature and conservation are central themes of the venue. (David Nordby/BN)



(Photos by David Nordby/BN)



The original Schneider family homestead is pictured below. The structure on the right in the photo above is covering the stone foundation of the home. (David Nordby/BN above, Submitted photo below)

