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Low hanging clouds race over the former Sanford barn on Route 30 in the town of Amsterdam.

Barn restoration gets boost

By **BILL SHEEHAN**
Recorder News Staff

TOWN OF AMSTERDAM — Efforts to make the final major structural repairs to the Sanford Broodmare barn on Route 30 got an unexpected boost this week with the announcement of a grant from a trust established by a prominent Saratoga racing figure.

“I almost cried when I opened the envelope and there’s a cashier’s check for \$42,000,” said Lou Hildebrandt, Jr., president of the Friends of the Sanford Stud Farm, adding he first heard of the Alfred Z. Solomon Charitable Trust from a Saratoga librarian who suggested he apply for restoration funding.

Solomon made a fortune selling variations of European

designs made by his company, known as Madcaps, in Manhattan’s garment district and was a fixture at Saratoga during more than 60 racing seasons.

Owner of a 286-acre farm in Gansevoort, Solomon died four years ago at the age of 104 leaving part of his fortune to the trust.

“I was skeptical of our chances but after getting a few nudges I did the paperwork and sent it in focusing on the training ring, but I didn’t think we’d get too far,” said Hildebrandt.

“That ring on the end of the barn is the only thing we haven’t tackled and it’s in the worst shape of anything,” he said.

Hildebrandt said he envisions a panorama inside the nine-

sided ring possibly featuring life size blow-ups of the thoroughbred farm’s active past.

“I’ve got a lot of old pictures and some of them would look great in a panorama and this is a great room for that,” said Hildebrandt.

According to Hildebrandt the money comes with a few conditions, one of them a clause to credit the training ring restoration to the Solomon trust.

“With this and the contribution from the town, we’ll have about \$75,000 to do this and address not only the structural issues but the interior aesthetics. It’s going to mean a change in the ring to becoming a nice showcase ... I’m ecstatic,” he said.

Hildebrandt said the group and the town, with the help of contributors, have spent about

\$100,000 on the restoration effort to date.

“We’ve gotten the best bang for our investment. There’s a new roof all around, the north side with the kitchen and dormitory is secure. They had to jack it up 14 inches but it’s all set now and the windows are all straight.

In addition to the financial boost, Hildebrandt thinks the Solomon grant will also add to the credibility of the FSSF.

“People will notice that we were worthy of this and with what we’re able to do with the money it positions us to look at a capital fund drive. We’re getting closer to my personal goal of having it operating as a visitors center by 2013, the 100th running of the Sanford Stakes,” he said.