

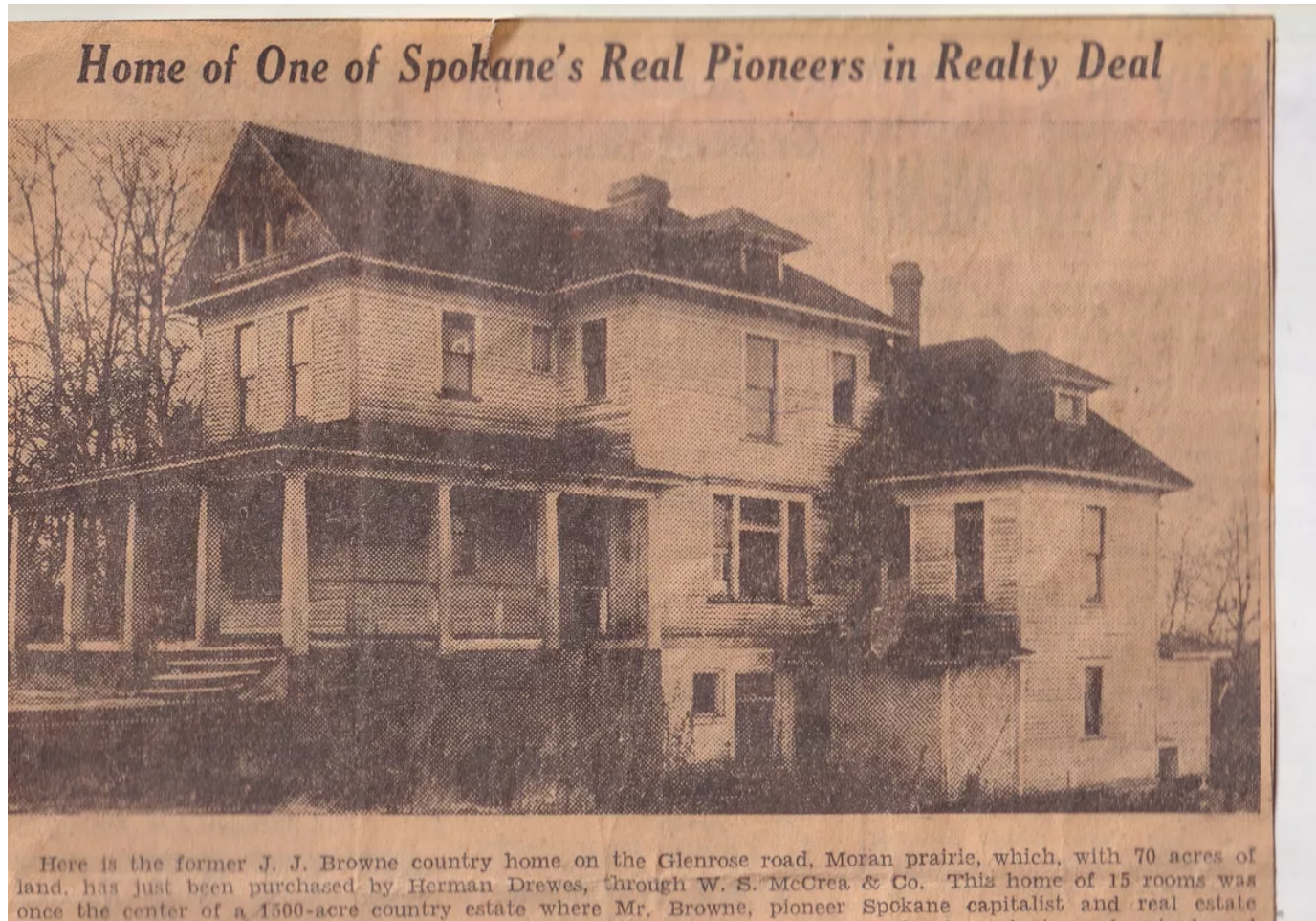
# THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

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NEWS > AGRICULTURE

## 'A little oasis': Bauer family, Land Conservancy agree to preserve 14 acres on Moran Prairie

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Farmland and suburbia coexisted on the Moran Prairie 50 years ago, but the equilibrium didn't last.

Houses gobbled up wheat and hay fields as the decades went by. Today, urbanization has overrun countryside and transformed a once-pastoral landscape into sprawl, complete with a Dairy Queen and Starbucks.

Most of the Moran Prairie on the upper South Hill will never return to what it once was. But thanks to a conservation agreement between the Bauer family and the Inland Northwest Land Conservancy, at least one sliver of undeveloped ground will survive.

The Land Conservancy last month announced that 14 acres of the Drewes Farm, located near the intersection of 57th Avenue and the Palouse Highway, will be permanently protected.

“This’ll be kind of a little oasis,” said Carol Corbin, the conservancy’s director of philanthropy and communications. “It’s a little island of land in the midst of a whole bunch of housing and urban development.”

John Bauer, who owns the Drewes Farm with his brother Dan and sister-in-law Paula, said his family wanted to protect the 14 acres for a few reasons. Turning the land into a miniature reserve will preserve some of his family’s legacy, he said.

“It’s a way to kind of give back to the community instead of having another hundred-plus homes in there,” Bauer said.

Not all of the Drewes Farm will remain open space. Part of it will become home to the new South Hill YMCA. Corbin said some of the southern end will be turned into housing.

Only a small portion of the property will still be farmed. Most of the 14 acres will be returned to its pre-agricultural state. Corbin said the plan is to restore a former wetland and establish walking trails that will be open to the public and accessible via the Ben Burr Trail.

The Drewes Farm, which today covers nearly 60 acres, has a rich history.

The Mullan Military Road cut through it in the 1800s, carrying wagons from Fort Benton, Montana, to near Walla Walla.

Spokane Daily Chronicle owner J.J. Browne, the namesake of Brownes Addition, lived on the property in the early 1900s.

The Spokane and Inland Railroad line, parts of which make up the Ben Burr Trail, ran along the farm’s western edge until the mid-20th century.

Herman and Rosie Drewes, John and Dan Bauer’s grandparents, acquired the property in 1935. Their family raised livestock and crops on the land for three generations.

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