

Greener Pastures



First barn in Eads, TN



Second barn in Moscow, TN

Building Homes For Horses

By Nancy Brannon

David Clark is a third-generation home builder. His grandfather, John Clark, Jr., started the company, Clark Construction, in 1942 and had a thriving business building homes after WWII. "It's our family heritage," David said.

Even though David is well seasoned in building homes, building barns is relatively new to him, and he has taken to it like a duck to water. A customer for whom he had previously built homes wanted him to build an equipment building and a horse barn on property he had bought in Eads, TN. "We know about quality construction and qual-

ity materials," David said, so he simply applied those same principles to barn building.

"For the first barn we built, we did some research with several design firms in the area. We also consulted with Barn Pros in Washington State, and with Classic Equine Equipment. We worked with Barn Pros on the design, and all the materials for this first barn were shipped from Washington State."

Barn Pros did the basic design, and the Clarks modified it. In collaboration with his father, John Clark and uncle, Chuck Clark, the final product came to life. "We probably over-built," he said, but the barn had to be built to withstand seismic activity and built, of course, to all Shelby County codes, which it easily met.

The design and finished product turned out so well that Classic Equine Equipment featured it on their catalog. "Classic was great to work with," David said. "They also designed the doors for the front of the equipment build-

ing. The barn is now occupied by horses, but its first occupants were friends and family of the owner for his 65th birthday party."

His next customer was his father-in-law Richard Watson. "If you want a nice barn, get a home builder to build your barn," Watson said.

David described his first barn as a "show barn" and this second barn as a "working barn." "But we kept upgrading – the framing, the finishes, adding nice touches. It turned out to be a really nice barn," he said.

An interesting feature of Watson's barn is that the lighting is hidden within the framing in the beams. "It's not lit with shop lights, but rather the light reflects off the ceiling and is not so harsh," David explained.

Both barns have some uncommon features for barns, but which are common in homes. Both barns are built on slabs, with squares of dirt left only for the stalls. As they built the slabs and footings, they put in brackets that would hold the beams. "So you don't have to worry about water issues because the beams are not sitting on the ground absorbing moisture," David explained. "We also built curbs to keep water from getting into the stalls." These are 8" curbs, so that shavings won't get into the aisle from the stall and you can wash the aisle without water getting into the stall. The curbs between stalls also define the stalls and make a barrier so a horse won't ever be able to get a foot stuck under the wooden stall wall.

Between posts are 2' X 6' framed walls with 2' X 6' tongue & groove as the interior finish on both barns. All the framing, the posts, joists, rafters, etc. are through-bolted, not just nailed together. "We bolted it together so it won't ever come apart," David explained. "Any pole barn can shift, or 'rack,' lean to the side. Bolting prevents the lean."



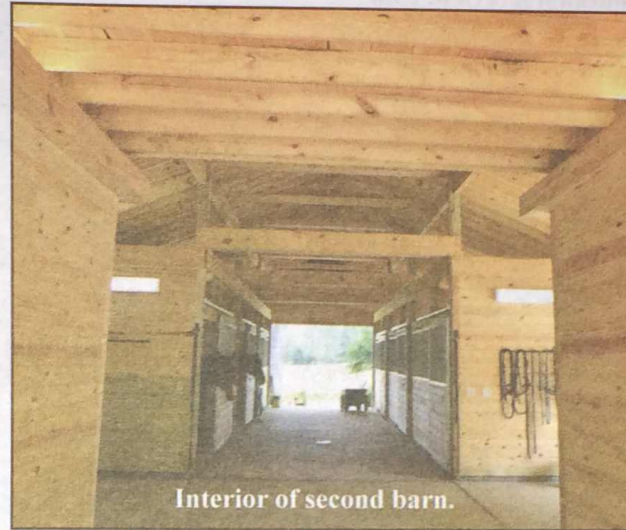
Interior of first barn.

For the roof, two layers of decking were used so that no roofing nails show through. The main layer of decking is 1' X 8' solid yellow pine and the second layer is oriented strand board (OSB), to add thickness and keep the nails from coming through.

David is conscientious about "green building" and strives for energy efficiency in all his homes. "In Watson's barn, the foam insulated, batted tack room and office area, with its concrete floor, keeps the room comfortably cool with no air conditioner needed," he said.

The interior barn doors were designed to allow as much ventilation to the horses as possible.

Any lumber within six inches of the slab is all treated lumber. The rest is regular pine. In the wash stall, treated lumber up to four feet was used to resist moisture damage. "Even if you use a metal lining in the wash stall, there is still a possibility that water can get behind it. So it needs to be open at the bottom (for any water to drain out) or use treated lumber."



Interior of second barn.

David found out that "a horse's tail can get stuck on just about anything, and a horse will chew on wood." So in the corners he put a chew guard.



The floor of the stalls is a 4-layer system: dirt, compacted very fine gravel, more dirt, and mats. "The compacted gravel gives stability and allows urine to soak away into the lower level of dirt."

After the barn was finished and the farrier came out to take care of the horses, his comment summarized well David's first two ventures into barn building: "The quality of the construction is really nice!" What David is really doing is building homes for horses – not just barns.

Details shown below are (left) custom cabinet made by Clark's finish carpenter to surround the large sink in tack room of the second barn. Middle photo is the custom dormer window and cupola and weather vane. (right) Even the farrier was greatly impressed with the quality of the barn when he came to work on the horses.

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