

Post & Beam Building Kits Keep The Past Alive

Metal storage buildings look out of place on rural homesteads to Len Dickinson. So, about four years ago, he decided to offer barn kits based on historic post and beam timber framing methods. He calls the business Sand Creek Post & Beam and it's headquartered in Wayne, Nebraska.

Until now, homeowners have only had two choices, Dickinson says. Build a metal building or rebuild an old barn, which is very expensive and difficult.

"There was no one offering a structure that had the traditional look of turn-of-the-century barns," he says.

The retired developer had always had an interest in post and beam construction and had once taken a course in it. He discovered he didn't have the talent to do it himself, but he was able to find skilled craftsmen who could.

Sand Creek Post & Beam offers four basic designs that are sold as kits suitable for barns, garages, workshops, horse barns and even barn homes: salt box, four square walls, horse barn and gambrel roof. By varying roof pitches, eave lengths and other details, each building can be customized for every customer, Dickinson says.

Sand Creek Post & Beam craftsmen use full dimension, rough-sawn ponderosa pine. They cut and assemble the post and beam frame for the structure at their Nebraska headquarters. Instead of the labor intensive mortise and tenon pegged corners, Sand Creek

uses 1/4-in. steel plates and nuts and bolts to secure the frame. Traditional barn windows, doors and cupolas are also custom made. After assembling the frame to ensure a perfect fit, it is disassembled and shipped with lumber to finish the walls and roof, along with doors, windows, Eastern red cedar for sills, complete assembly plans and instructions. Lean-to and insulation packages and other options are available.

The business has sold barn kits in 15 states, and has a network of dealers who can erect the kit or recommend a builder to do the work. The Nebraska business provides support to builders unfamiliar with post and beam construction. A few customers choose to build themselves, Dickinson says.

"People are looking for the traditional classic rural styles," Dickinson says. "They're drawn to that." Ponderosa pine works well. It has a Western look, appealing knots and finishes nicely.

The buildings work well for human habitation too. One Des Moines bachelor farmer built a barn house, Dickinson says, complete with river rock on the outside.

Sizes start at 18 by 18 ft. and go as big as the customer wants. A Kansas City customer had a 10,000 sq. ft. barn built, and an even larger building was ordered recently.

Prices start at about \$10,000 for material for an 18 by 20-ft. building. Most buildings kits average \$30,000.

Dickinson and his partner and wife, Julie



Len Dickinson offers barn kits based on historic post and beam timber framing methods. By varying roof pitches, eave lengths and other details, each building can be customized.

Goeller, have been pleased with their business so far.

"We really pride ourselves in preserving our heritage," Dickinson says.

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Hydraulic Driver Vibrates Fenceposts Into Ground

Richard Murray of Red Deer, Alberta, says there are a lot of reasons why his "Post-Vibe" fence post driver is superior to conventional methods of putting posts in the ground.

It vibrates posts into the ground which Murray says is more efficient and safer than other methods.

The Post-Vibe vibrates at up to 9,000 rpm's, depending on the machine it's mounted on. It quick taches to skid steers or farm tractors.

The Post-Vibe installer can be used for both steel and wood posts. It reduces labor costs, Murray says, because set-up time from post to post is far quicker than for conventional post pounders.

"The working action of the Post-Vibe post installer is safer because there's no cycling of a hammer up and down - only downward force and vibration, which does the work until the desired depth is reached."

A cup on the bottom of the vibrator holds the top of the post so that it can't move or deflect sideways.

"I also have a number of attachments available for the Post-Vibe, including various cup sizes, weights, and a carry basket," Murray says. "I can also custom build units."

With just two grease nipples on the Post-Vibe, maintenance is minimal.

The Post-Vibe comes in two different models. Model 400 is on a quick-tach plate and will only reach as high as the unit it's on. It's priced at \$9,572 (Can.). Model 102 has a mast with 4 ft. of lift and sells for \$13,955 (Can.). Both prices are F.O.B. Red Deer, Alberta.

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"Post-Vibe" fence post driver quick-taches to skid steer loaders or farm tractors. It vibrates posts into the ground.



A cup on bottom of vibrator holds top of post so it can't move or deflect sideways.



"It lets me pick up a log and turn it into firewood lengths in no time at all," says Fred Miller about his home-built log clamp. Mounts on either a skid steer or a tractor loader.

"Back-Saver" Log Clamp

Turning logs into firewood got a whole lot easier for Fred Miller when he put together his log clamp. Mounted on either a skid steer or a tractor loader, he can pick up a log and turn it into firewood lengths in no time flat.

"It saves my back. I can pick up a log with it and hold it two feet off the ground," says Miller. "That lets me stand up and cut it with the chain saw or carry it to the firewood site and cut it there. It'll lift a log up to about 14 in. diameter."

Miller wanted a simple clamp that would be easy to use and wouldn't cost an arm and a leg. He used with a quick-tach plate to match his loader. He welded two 2-ft. lengths of 1/4-in., 4-in. square steel tubing to the bottom of the plate. Small triangular gussets welded to the tubes and to the plate help reinforce the arms.

Miller then welded a 3-ft. section of the square tubing to the center of the plate to serve as a mount for the clamping arm and the hydraulic cylinder to operate it. A clevis hitch at the top serves as a seat for the end of the hydraulic ram, while a second clevis at the end of the clamping arm connects to the base of the cylinder.

The clamping arm itself is fabricated from 2-in. square tubing. Its serrated edge is made with 1/4-in. thick, 2-in. long teeth that are



Clamping arm is fabricated from 2-in. sq. tubing with serrated edges.

cut and welded to the tubing. The clamping arm hinges to the vertical upright at its half-way point, just above the quick-tach plate.

"The clamping arms are offset so the last length of log left in the clamp is about the right size for the stove," explains Miller.

After building it, he decided to reinforce the upright post. Miller welded two 30-in. lengths of tubing against the plate in an A-frame. It ends about 6 in. from the end of the vertical support and is welded to it.

Miller estimates he spent about \$300 in labor and materials on his log clamp. Most of the steel was scrap. The most expensive component was the quick attach plate at \$120 and the hydraulic cylinder at \$80.

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