

Old Dairy Barn Converted Into Business Center

Musician and instrument maker Gary Stone renovated a huge 34 by 100-ft. long former dairy barn into the headquarters for two successful businesses he calls Stoney End Harps and Hobgoblin Music. "The barn was in tough shape and full of junk when I bought it," said Stone, "but the size and location on a main highway was too good to pass up." Now his barn, located just outside of scenic Red Wing, Minn., has become a local landmark.

Stone began the renovation by hiring an engineer to evaluate the framing, walls and foundation. "The old barn was built to hold 200 tons of hay and house 30 dairy cows," said Stone. "I knew we'd have to make quite a few changes to make it into a wood shop and a music hall."

They started by replacing the field stone foundation with new 4-ft. sq. concrete footings. Broken single pane windows and the rickety doors were replaced with insulated ones. The cow stalls, feed bunks and water pipes were removed, and the gutters filled in to create a smooth, open workspace. The former milk barn is now filled with saws, sanders, benches, wood templates, lumber, hand tools and work-in-progress jobs for Stoney End Harps.

"This old barn makes a tremendous shop," says Stone. "There's good light from the windows, nice ventilation, and we even made the milk room into a display area." Stone builds more than a dozen models of custom-made harps, ranging from small lap models to floor models. He makes them from several types of wood and markets them across the U.S. and around the world.

Stone wanted FARM SHOW readers to know that he's more than just a woodworker and musician, so he pointed out one of his special "homemade" tools. It's a 6-ft. long variable speed belt sander that uses the gearbox from a 1960 Plymouth Valiant. "We've used it every day for years and it purrs like a kitten" Stone says.

The old hayloft of Stone's barn was the second part of his renovation project. "When I first saw that 40 foot tall loft it reminded me of an airplane hangar with a leaky roof," Stone says with a laugh. "It had floor-to-ceiling wooden hay chutes, angled support trusses, broken windows, a squeaky hay carrier track and lots of pigeons."

The engineer designed in reinforcing laminated beams and a roof system that put 14 in. of insulation and new steel sheeting over the existing roof. "The interior retains the open trusses and warm feel of exposed wood. We also kept the wooden hay chutes for interior support. They make real nice storage space," says Stone. The old hay carrier still sits on the track with a dangling long rope, but without the pigeons.

The main floor of the loft now has offices and the retail store of Hobgoblin Music. With a huge selection of instruments, CDs, sheet music and memorabilia, the store is a popular local and online attraction. A second floor was added above the offices to create a large banquet and concert room that's more than 60 ft. long. Stone is quick to point out that one of the remaining hay chutes is his mini control room for lights, sound and projectors. Interior stairs to all three levels and two exterior walkways to parking provide easy access for reunions, weddings, plays and other events.

Not content with the businesses in the barn, Stone has two other ventures going on outside. To the north, a sloping former pasture creates natural hillside seating for his covered outdoor music stage. An outdoor music festival is held there every year. And to the south, another pasture has been planted to grapes, which Stone hopes to use to create his own brand of wine.

"I never thought I'd have all these things going on around the barn," says Stone, "but one thing lead to another, and now they're all going well and it's a lot of fun. I've always liked music and woodworking and this business really serves both of those interests."



Big 34 by 100-ft. long former dairy barn now serves as the headquarters for two successful businesses.

Asked where the wine fits in, Stone is quick to say "a person really needs liquid refreshment when the work stops and the music starts."

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African-Bred Goats Catch On Fast

They helped turn our operation around," says Dawn Steiger about the Savanna goats she and her partner, David Leitch, raise on their Kentucky farm.

Unlike Boer meat goats, fullblood Savannas are rare. She's part of an organization of breeders working to ensure survival of the breed. The number of verified fullblood does in the U.S. is only in the hundreds and it's difficult and expensive to bring in more from overseas.

The goats were originally bred by the Khosa people along the Eastern Cape of South Africa.

"These were peasant goats," Steiger says. "What appeals to us is the fact that these goats were left alone in adverse conditions and survived."

Savannas are hardy and adaptable, have great mothering traits and a good nature, and are resistant to tick-borne diseases and parasites.

Because of the high cost of verified fullblood bucks at \$2,000 to \$5,000, they also raise purebreds at \$500 to \$1,000. Purebreds come from breeding verified fullbloods to another goat breed. They use Pape Heritage Spanish goats for the foundation animal because its hardiness is well matched to the Savannas. It takes five breeding cycles to get a purebred.

Much of their 500 head is made up of fullblood Savanna bucks bred to Spanish does. Leitch likes the 3/4 and 7/8 does best because they're an affordable commercial goat with all the right stuff.

"The cross makes a plucky, large carcass meat goat with good mothering traits," Steiger says.

Savanna goats can be found in hot and cold climates; all goats have issues in wetter regions. They thrive on browse and require minimum care and handling.

"Pound for pound they're a lower input animal," Steiger says, noting that they gain rapidly and are white, which makes them sought after by ethnic groups for religious purposes.

"Buyers from a diverse population can't get enough goat meat. Our consumer wants a lean, young animal under a year - a cross between veal and lamb," says Steiger, a board member of the Kentucky Goat Producers Association.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Rising Sun Ranch (ph 270 842-2600; www.savannagoats.com; or the North American Savannah Association; www.savannahassociation.com or the World Wide Sheep and Goat Archives; www.wwsga.com).



Fullblood Savanna goats are rare. Dawn Steiger is part of an organization of breeders working to ensure survival of the breed.

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