

Evolution of the Heavy Horse

Winning a License and Remodeling a Feed Store

In May of 2012, I was perusing the Carbon County News Legals section while working at the feed store. I noticed an ad from the State of Montana for a lottery for an all-new beverage license for Carbon County, not to be within 5 miles of an incorporated town. For some reason, I looked up the website, entered my name and address, and returned to work. The drawing was scheduled for the 24th of May, 2012, and around the 1st of June, I realized I had never heard who had won the lottery.

Lo and behold, on the 11th of June, I received a certified package in the mail from the state with a letter stating that I had won the lottery. At that time, I had 30 days to complete the attached application. The application itself is very involved, and I was not able to complete it in 30 days, but I was able to apply for a 30 day extension. On the 7th of August 2012, I submitted my application. From that point on, I spent the next 7 months researching how to design, open, and operate a bar.

Given the fact that I already owned the building, I basically designed a small bar that I could afford to build. With the help of local contractors, I started remodeling the Roberts Ranch Outfitters feed store into a bar, but the feed store continued to operate until late September of 2013.

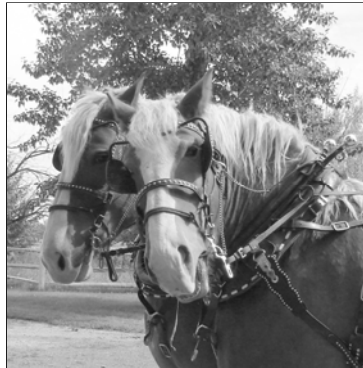
Materials

The tin on the walls of the main bar area came from 2 locations. Gordy Hill rebuilt a barn on his place, and some of this tin came from the roof. The rest of the tin came from Brad and Corrina Abbe because they had removed it from the Roberts Fire Hall as part of a roofing project. Thanks, Gordy, Brad, and Corrina!

The tin on the walls in the bathrooms was donated by Kyle at Simply Soothing Day Spa. Her late husband John had acquired old doors off of a semi dry van, and he used the plywood but left the tin, which I then used in the bathrooms. Thanks, Kyle!

The glass cooler door came from Red Lodge Beverage. It is a repurposed display cooler that I cut the door section off of because the cooler itself no longer worked. Thanks, Leon!

The three tables along the south wall were found by Si Ryan when the Windmill Restaurant in Billings was remodeling. Thanks, Si and the Windmill!



As you look around the bar, you will notice pictures of Chet and Charlie, the draft horses. This is Si Ryan's team that we drive for fun and in competitions. Chet and Charlie live at Spring Creek Ranch just southwest of town. My wife, Kate, took the pictures and had them

blown up. Thanks, Si, Chet, and Charlie!

And of course every bar needs a bar! I decided to call Howdy Hildebrand and see if he was going to use the floor out of a wrecked dry van that he had. He generously allowed me to remove the floor, so I spent 3 days unscrewing boards and spraying wasp nests to get the materials for the bar. I sanded the wood before I removed it to smooth and even it out. Then, Hunter Bell cut it to fit the layout. We filled in all of the old screw holes with small screws so the epoxy would not run through. The finish is a two-part epoxy that we achieved by pouring 2 coats to seal the wood followed by 2 flood coats. The process only requires you to pour out the epoxy (after mixing it) and then to let it spread out on its own. I think it turned out wonderfully.

Thanks, Hunter!

And speaking of Hunter Bell -- Hunter basically did all of the carpentry, flooring, painting, coffee making, and door hanging. Again, thank you, Hunter!

Finally, the floor. I found the wood in a small New England fishing port. It came out of a sunken 1700s schooner from Captain Bly's fleet. We hauled it back to Montana in a 1978 Courier that didn't have A/C. Once it arrived, we immediately started hand scraping it to bring out the natural colors, after which we put all of the boards in a steam box at 1200° to straighten them, which is a trick my old buddy Scott Fink taught me.

With a pocket knife, I whittled the tongue and groove into each board before measuring and cutting each to exactly 48" with a Leatherman. The floor was finally put down with 3/4" lag screws. Please try not to step on it.



And, of course, I would like to thank my wife, Kate, and our dog, Sydney. Without them, I would still be crazy.

-- John Cordes, owner