

Turner Barn (1898)

19805 S. Moonlight Rd. - Gardner
National Register of Historic Places

Christmas cards, calendars, magazine covers, advertisements... The image of this barn precedes its name. The William Thomas Turner barn image has been featured in countless publications, including a nationally distributed 1920's trade catalogue. Resting peacefully amongst the gently rolling hills of southwest Johnson County, the Turner barn stands as a recognized, yet unknown,



The Turner Barn was constructed by prominent barn builder Arthur Clinton in 1898 for Tom Turner. *Johnson County Museum Collection.*

Johnson County landmark. Built in 1898, and still owned by the Turner family, the barn is approaching its centennial year. It is a rare and exceptional barn in both Johnson County and the United States for its design, craftsmanship, and longevity.

Born in 1853, William Thomas (Tom) Turner was one of eleven children born to Edwin and Susan Hendrix Turner. The Turner family emigrated to southwest Johnson County from North Carolina in 1857. The land in Johnson County at that



The Turner Barn, seen in a modern photo, was used continuously until the early 1990s and continues to be maintained. *Johnson County Museum Collection.*

time was described in a local history account as "a quarter (section) of land on praries as fine as the sun ever shone upon."

Tom Turner purchased the property on which the barn now stands in 1891 from a land auction in nearby Lecompton, Kansas. The farm was originally part of a land grant to a veteran of the War of 1812. It was a common practice to compensate veterans for

their patriotism with gifts of land in the western frontier. Many veterans or their widows then immediately sold their land in exchange for cash value. This

property was purchased in 1860 by G.M Waugh, who farmed the land until the Turners purchased it in 1891.

In 1898, Arthur J. Clinton, a prominent barn builder in the midwest, was hired to supervise the Turner barn construction. His trademark white, double diamond design was incorporated into the doors of the barn. Historically, a man's success within a community was gauged by the quality of his home. Conversely, in rural areas, the financial success of a farmer was measured by the quality of his farm buildings, crops and animals. The Turner barn represents the highest quality for such a building. The barn is 40 feet wide, 62 feet long, and 45 feet tall (from the summit), and is constructed of Louisiana Red Cypress. Cypress, an expensive wood, is exceptional for its longevity and durability.

The two-level barn was designed to give space for livestock and equipment on the foundation level and grain and hay in the second story. The windows and louvered cupolas provided ample ventilation to help dry the loose hay stored in the loft. The barn was used continuously until the early 1990s, and is still meticulously maintained.

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