

PICKET FENCE

By Glen Salow
B&C Official Measurer
Photos courtesy of Author

The crunch of the leaves behind me got closer and closer, and I soon realized this was not another gray squirrel. After what seemed like hours, a nice buck finally appeared out of a thicket behind me. I waited patiently until he was within easy bow range. As soon as the buck passed behind a tree, I brought my bow to full draw, settled my 20-yard pin behind the shoulder and squeezed the release. The buck kicked up his back legs and ran about 10 yards, stopped and stared back at me in the tree, as both of us were trying to figure out what had just happened. Not knowing if I hit him, I wasted little time knocking another arrow. I drew back again and put my 30-yard pin behind the front shoulder and squeezed the release. I watched my arrow find its mark for the second time on my first Pope and Young whitetail. That was November 8, 1995, and I was 14 years old. To this day it is still my most memorable hunt.

Deer hunting has always been a very big thing in my family. Every Salow family holiday had talks on the big bucks that were harvested and the ones that got away. When I was 12 years old, my father got me involved in deer hunting. I can't thank him enough for that. Since that November evening when I harvested my first deer, something clicked, and it was the start of a whitetail obsession. My passion grew from bowhunting, gun hunting and shed hunting, to becoming an Official Measurer with the Boone and Crockett and Pope and Young Clubs.

Now in my 30s, I have been fortunate to harvest some spectacular deer over the years. Being a self-employed insurance broker allows me to have an adaptable schedule when it comes to deer season. Add my very understanding wife Ashley to the picture, and I'm blessed with the ability to spend many hours in the woods each fall. Of all the deer I have been fortunate to harvest, one buck in particular stands out. He was a buck that would eventually be known as "Picket Fence."

Of all the deer I have been fortunate to harvest, one buck in particular stands out. He was a buck that would eventually be known as "Picket Fence."



The evening of Halloween 2010 brought an east wind. I only had a couple sets for an east wind, as we usually don't get that wind a lot, but I got settled in the tree about three o' clock. The end of October is one of my favorite times to hunt. I always have great success rattling and calling this time of year as mature deer are usually on the first doe or within days of getting with one. The night started off great with two young bucks—a 1½- and a 2½-year-old—doing a lot of chasing a doe. The action died off for a while, giving me a chance to do a quick rattling sequence. Within minutes, a good 150-inch 3-year-old came in to investigate. He came right to the tree and looked around, then did what I did not predict—he bedded

down 25 yards from the tree. Fifteen minutes went by and I noticed another buck in the clearing in front of me. At first I did not recognize the deer, but once he turned his head I immediately recognized him as the buck my good friend Dave and I had named Picket Fence—a giant typical 6 x 5, grossing around 195-200 inches on the mainframe. I was really shocked to see this deer in my area. The area I am hunting was within the city limits. I was one of the few selected hunters with a buck tag good within the city limits, and Dave's area is miles outside the city limits.

I immediately got my bow in hand, predicting he would proceed down the ridge right by me, giving me a 15-yard shot. Then

I could not believe what had just happened. I went from shooting some video of him to harvesting him in a matter of minutes.

the unpredictable happened; the 3-year-old that had bedded down by me stood and bristled up to Picket Fence, and to my amazement, ran Picket Fence back over the ridge. I sat in disbelief—a 3-year-old chasing off a 200-inch 5-year-old. Fifteen minutes later, Picket Fence returned but was a ridge away, well out of bow range.

Over the next few weeks I had multiple encounters with Picket Fence, as did my buddy Dave. I was able to get a lot of video footage of him, but he was never within range. We both figured out he was not an aggressive deer, as any calling to him or any other bucks would push him away. He was also quite the wanderer too, as he would cover about a two-mile area from one day to the next.

On November 17th, I settled into one of my best sets at 11 a.m. The stand was located next to a big creek with steep banks, right in the middle of a major doe bedding-area. At 12:30 I did a quick rattling sequence to try to make something happen. Within minutes a big, mature deer appeared down the creek line coming in to investigate. Not familiar with this deer, I shot some video of him. After looking him over for a minute, I decided I wanted to shoot him. The arrow found its mark, and just like that, my tag was filled on a 160-inch 5 x 5.

Dave continued to have encounters with Picket Fence after that, but he was always too far away. One late December afternoon, I spotted Picket Fence feeding with several other deer in an alfalfa field, and it looked pretty clear that he would make it through to next season.

I spent some time in February and March searching for Picket's sheds. But the shed-hunting pressure in the area is very heavy, and he was feeding in a very viewable public area, so it was obvious that others knew about him. I assumed someone had already found his sheds.

Time really flies the older you get, and before I knew it, we went from February shed-hunting to August. This is the time of year when I get all my cameras out to take an inventory of what's in store for the season. I believe one of the most crucial steps in harvesting big, mature deer is having the evidence they exist. I had my sights set on

one deer, and I was really looking forward to see what Picket Fence had grown into. One day while setting out cameras, I met a local shed hunter in the area. Casual conversation turned into chatter about a giant buck that he had seen in the area. He told me he was shed-hunting in January 2011 and came across a big 91-inch typical six-point antler. He showed me the antler, and I immediately recognized the shed as Picket Fence. He told me the story of where he always saw the deer and how he found the shed. As much as I wanted it, I knew it was a trophy to him more than me. He did say however if I shot the deer, things might change.

It was the middle of September when I finally got my first pictures of Picket Fence. He was still a very large typical 6 x 5, but his big six-point side switched from his left to his right side. Actually, it seemed he went downhill a bit. Judging by his body and the last years of history Dave and I assumed that he was 6 years old in 2011 and would gross approximately 180-185 typical.

I continued to monitor my cameras as Dave and I were both getting a lot of pictures of him. I was just waiting for the right time to start hunting him. Finally, late October arrived—the time of year I usually start my three-week vacation. I like to spend every day from sun up to sun down in the tree. I had a couple bucks I was looking for, and one of them was Picket Fence.

The morning of October 26 I decided to try a bold move and sneak right into the heart of a major bedding-area that Picket Fence always seemed to be in. The wind was right and everything was perfect for the set I had waited all year to get into. The stand is located on a major bend in a creek where steep banks allow me to walk all the way down the creek, pop up the bank and climb right into my stand undetected—or so I thought. I had just gotten up the bank and was literally at the base of my tree when I



Glen Salow harvested this buck, Picket Fence, while hunting in Polk County, Iowa, in 2011. This buck scores 166-6/8 points.

heard the famous stomp of the foot. I looked in amazement at a doe 40 yards away—and right beside her was the one and only Picket Fence. They did not stick around long as they snorted and bounded off. Frustration set in immediately as I climbed the tree. The action was slow and Picket fence was nowhere to be found. I thought for sure my chances of ever seeing him again in my area were over.

When I left that day I hung a Cuddeback camera in an access area to another hunting spot; I had a hunch he may be using this area. Over the next week I hunted a few different places without any sightings of Picket Fence. I was seeing good deer and having great action on most sites—just not the one I was looking for. It was November 4th, and I went back for the Cuddeback that I had hung. I was scrolling through the pictures and was amazed that my camera had captured Picket Fence numerous times. A couple days later I secured permission to hunt this new area. I made a bold decision to skip an afternoon hunt to go in, hang a stand, and get out.

I wanted to hunt from the tree in the worst way over the next few days but I needed a west to northwest wind. Finally, the morning of November 10th came with an inch of snow on the ground and a bitter northwest wind. I was able to get in undetected, and get settled in. The morning started out great. At first light I had a doe come in with her tail half curled, indicating she was in heat. Over the next few hours, five to six different bucks came down her trail looking for her. At 9:30 a.m. the action slowed up quite a bit.



TOP LEFT: Glen took a chance with his Cuddeback in an access area to a new hunting area. After seeing Picket Fence he secured permission to hunt this new area. **LEFT AND ABOVE:** Glen had the opportunity to video this footage of Picket Fence.

About 15 minutes had passed when I looked to my left, down in the bottom, and could not believe my eyes. Picket Fence was coming up the ridge right to me. I immediately grabbed my video camera and began to film him, as I had not gotten any footage of him this year. He was coming to a point where he would have to go left or go right. If he went right, he would come by me at 20 yards. If he chose to go left, he would angle away from me.

He went left. I sat there silently and shot video of him.

Experience told me he was not aggressive, so any calling would send him the other way. He was angled away from me at about 50 yards, when all of a sudden he looked ahead on the ridge and here came a 5-year-old 140-inch 10-pointer I had seen on multiple hunts. Picket Fence took one look at him, turned on a dime, and proceeded to come right to me. I began to panic. I had to put my camera down and get my bow in hand in a short amount of time without being picked off. Picket Fence passed behind a tree and I came to full draw. He stepped into the opening, and I bleated to stop him. I held my

20-yard pin right behind the front the shoulder and squeezed the release. The shot looked perfect. He bounded up the hill not 15 yards and stopped, looked around, his rear end began to wobble, and he fell over.

I could not believe what had just happened. I went from shooting some video of him to harvesting him in a matter of minutes. And to top it all off, he was lying within 35 yards of the tree. I immediately called my wife and told her the good news. She was very happy for me as always. I then called Dave and few friends of mine and they were all very happy for me as well. I finally got down out of my tree stand to have a look at him. Walking up to him and seeing the huge typical 6 x 5 frame is a sight I will never forget.

I got the deer tagged, loaded and checked in. We then spent some time taking some great field photos of the deer. Being an official scorer for Boone and Crockett Club, one of the most common things I see is people who shoot a great animal and never get good harvest pictures. They always regret it later on, so I always make sure to take great pictures.

A few weeks later I got a call from

another local hunter in the area. As we caught up on things, he told me about a set of sheds he found a couple of years ago. He described them to me, and it sounded a lot like Picket Fence. A couple days later I met up with him to take a look at them. It was obvious that it was Picket Fence from back in 2009. He had found them in the spring of 2010. He was a mainframe 5 x 5 with a split G2. With a 20-inch spread he would have scored in the mid-180s. He ever-so kindly gave me the sheds. Not long after that, I obtained the 91-inch six-point as well. I cannot thank these two guys enough for the sheds off this deer.

After the 60-day drying period my good friend Dave Boland put the official score on him. He grossed 185 $\frac{4}{8}$ with a 19 $\frac{7}{8}$ inside spread and netted 166 $\frac{6}{8}$ typical. Picket Fence will be hard to forget anytime soon. In a way, it's almost saddening that he's gone, and Dave and I cannot play cat and mouse with him anymore. The pieces of history, the experience, and the harvest will always be etched into my mind—right alongside that very first hunt where it all began back in 1995. ■