

Old-time values brought up-to-date

Local builder's work to be on HGTV, again

BY LEONARD SPARKS
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ELDRED – The wall-length shelves behind Charles Petersheim's desk are crowded with manual typewriters rescued from flea markets and estate sales.

The aging machines, some dating to the 1930s, are fitting symbols for a man who has built Eldred homebuilder Catskill Farms partly by marketing the past.

Since Petersheim founded it in 2002, the company has established an award-winning niche: design, build and sell modest homes for buyers drawn to old-style farmhouses and country cottages.

Ten years later, Catskill Farms is an outlier in a still-wounded new-home construction industry. It doubled its output between 2006 and 2011 and had its work featured on the HGTV show "Blog Cabin."

Next comes a bigger stage: a profile of three of its homes on the network's popular show "Selling New York," which will bring it before an estimated audience of 3 million next month.

"It's going to be viewed multiple times by millions of viewers," Petersheim said. "It's really big time."

"We've had the right product at the right time," Petersheim



MICHELE HASKELL/Times Herald-Record photos

Despite low interest in the home market, Charles Petersheim of Catskill Farms in Eldred has succeeded with modest homes fashioned as old-style farmhouses and country cottages. Output has doubled. Three of his houses will be HGTV's popular "Selling New York" in May.

said.

Catskill Farms was not even an idea when 9/11 brought a halt to commercial construction in New York City. Petersheim, then working as a commercial construction manager in the city, became jobless with little idea when work would return.

He found himself living in a 400-square-foot house in Cochection when he met a local real estate agent who pitched to buyers from the city the idea of renovating old houses as country homes.

What often started with enthusiasm often ended in emotional and financial disaster as inexperienced buyers struggled to fix up homes in an unfamiliar area, Petersheim said.

That recognition fueled an idea: Offer those buyers the same dream, spare them the challenges of renovating and encourage their input in the design and construction.

"We took a process that was completely broken – which was fix up this old house and go broke trying to do it – to this almost concierge process," he said.

Actor David Cross and musician Albert Hammond Jr. have been clients. But so have young New York City professionals – many first-time buyers – seeking a country getaway.

"As designers, we're challenged to get on the same page as our clients."

CHARLES PETERSHEIM
Catskill Farms

"They have great taste, and we have great taste," Petersheim said. "As designers, we're challenged to get on the same page as our clients."

Elements that define a Catskill Farms house include wrap-around porches, metal radiators and wood-burning stone fireplaces. Petersheim also incorporates material salvaged from old barns, such as beams and doors.

A new home wrapped in Old World charm convinced Bryce Boyd and his partner to buy a two-bedroom Catskill Farms cottage in Barryville nearly three years ago.

Neither had been to Sullivan County when they visited a friend who owned one of the

builder's homes.

"We still value the city," Boyd said. "(But) this is where you really get to stretch out, play in the dirt building a garden."

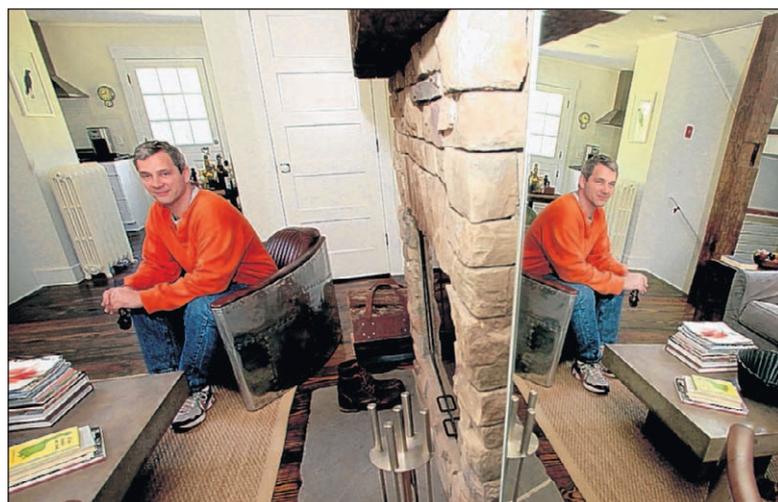
Within the last year, the couple opened Region General Store in Barryville. They sell gourmet food products, including locally made items, and household goods.

"We just love the area so much we figured out a way to spend more time here," Boyd said.

Catskill Farms sold seven homes in 2006 and 14 in 2011. It also expanded into Ulster County last year and expects to complete 16 homes this year.

Petersheim spent three days in February being filmed by a crew from "Selling New York." The show is tentatively scheduled to air some time in May.

"We're expecting our phones to be ringing and our email boxes to be filled," Petersheim said.



Builder Catskill Farms has expanded into Ulster County and expects 2012 growth. Founder Charles Petersheim at one of its homes.