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**"To Make a
Long Story Short..."**
A Tribute to Charlie Rowe

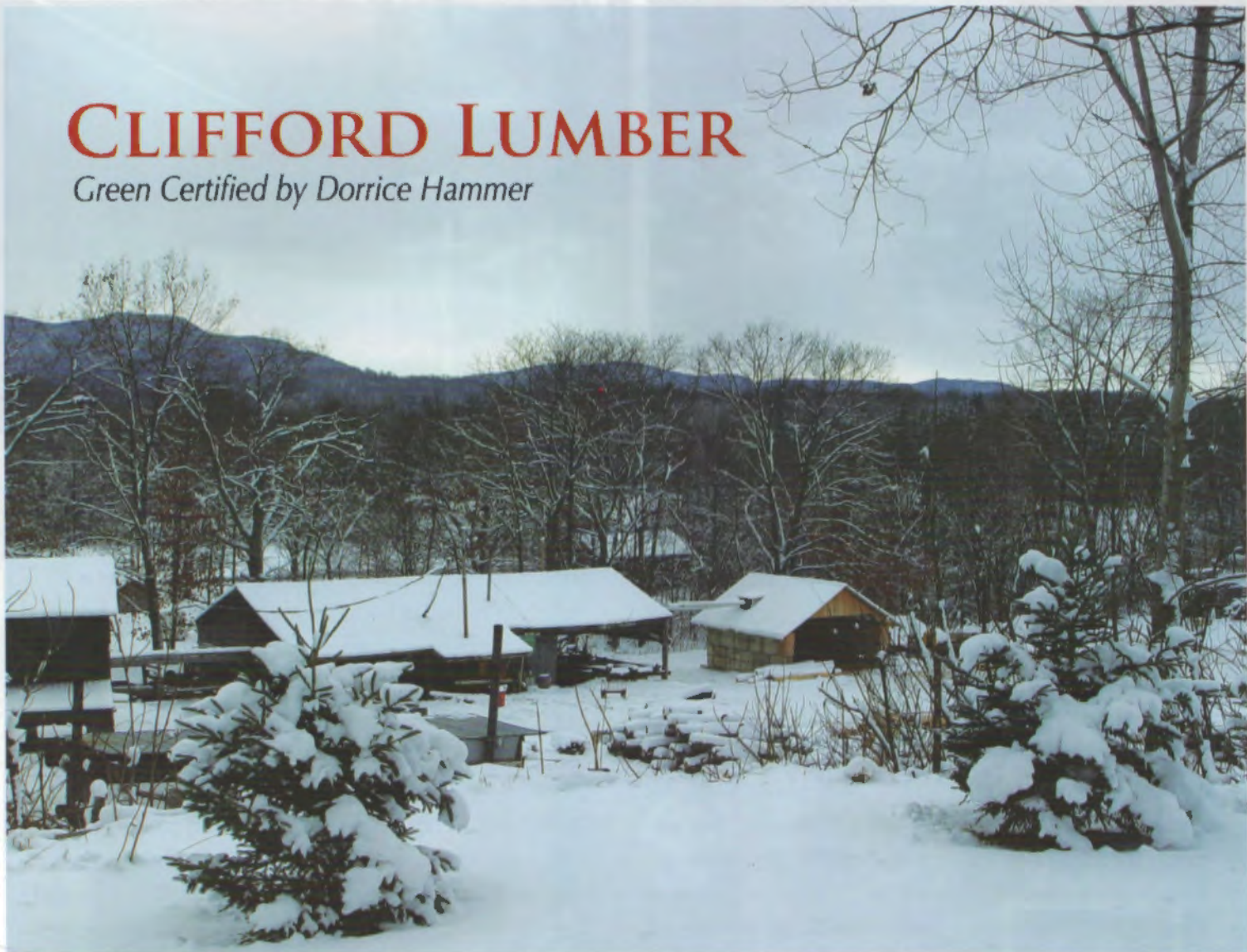
Remridge North
*Diane Starr at Home
in the Northeast Kingdom*

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Employing a Town



CLIFFORD LUMBER

Green Certified by Dorrice Hammer



At left: The Gardners' firewood operation sells 1200-1500 cords of wood annually. Marie Gardner. Peter's sturdy wood boxes which stack easily and are used by apple and organic farmers for harvesting. Lynn Gardner. Peter Gardner in front of Clifford boxes. Above: A view of the lumber yard.

Unless you live in the vicinity of Hinesburg, you probably haven't heard of Clifford Lumber. They don't advertise, and they aren't looking to grow larger.

Tucked below the Hinesburg hill where the owners/partners Lynn and Marie Gardner live is their small lumber business on ten acres. Lynn's grandfather Harold Clifford started the business in 1929. Lynn and Marie's son Peter, the third partner, has a house up the hill next to theirs. He works with them and will most likely take over the business someday. Their son David is in the computer industry, and their daughter Amanda is a horse trainer in Costa Rica. The business has two full-time employees during the winter, three in the summer, and occasionally some interns. We spoke with all three of the Gardner partners in Lynn's office and noted the historic photos of Harold Clifford and

the sawmill in its early days. They hang with pride over Lynn's desk. The Gardners described the operation of the business with enthusiasm, finishing each other's sentences in their eagerness to portray every aspect correctly. Like many Vermonters, not only do they operate that business, but several others too.

Clifford Lumber is Green Certified, meaning that they practice sustainable forestry. All the logs they purchase come from Vermont or New York forests within a sixty mile radius of the sawmill. The logs are from managed-use forests which are overseen by certified foresters. After the logs are purchased and delivered to the lumberyard, they are sawn into various lumber products. Clifford Lumber produces many timbers for timber frame houses and custom buildings. They recently filled a large order for the rebuilding of the Green Mountain Club in Waterbury.



We left the office and walked through the lumberyard, following the route the logs take. First they travel through a de-barker. The bark is stripped from the logs and later sold for mulch. Then the logs are stacked before they are run through a fifty-two inch Chase head rig circular saw, powered by a 175-h.p. diesel engine, which trims them into a rectangular shape or “squares them up.” The sawdust is blown into its own shed, where farmers and horse owners buy it for animal bedding. The logs next travel through a re-saw, which cuts them into boards. The boards are stacked on “stickers” and air-dried for six months; they are mostly for retail sales. After curing properly, the boards go through planers and then are stacked in sheds according to size. Here they wait until a purchase order sets in motion a delivery to customers in Clifford Lumber’s trucks.

The Gardners also sell kiln-dried firewood, mostly to

homes in nearby Charlotte, Shelburne, and Jericho. A vibrating conveyor first shakes the debris off the wood. The logs are then cut into sixteen inch pieces, split, and dried in kilns fed by scrap wood. One big customer is American Flatbread in Burlington, which buys the firewood it needs for the restaurant’s ovens from Clifford Lumber. The Gardners’ firewood operation sells 1200-1500 cords of wood annually.

The Gardners’ third business is Clifford Boxes, which produces sturdy wooden harvest boxes made from the lumberyard’s scrap wood. The idea for this product came from customers Larry and Lois Randell. The boxes come in two sizes. The smaller ones are the size of milk crates and they stack well, which is a feature their customers appreciate. Used by apple orchards and organic farms, the boxes sell for \$7 or \$8 apiece, depending on whether they have



Above left: These stacked logs have multiple purposes: mulch, sawdust for animal bedding and retail lumber. The house sits up on a hill behind the lumber operation. Scraps of wood to be made into “Clifford Boxes”. Peter poses with his stacked work.



Above: The Gardner family: Lynn, Marie, and Peter. Field bins. Firewood for sale in bundles. Lynn explaining his operation.

a built-in handle or not. The Gardners also make a larger box called a field bin. Organic farms buy these boxes, which sell for \$80 each, and stack them with fork lifts. The Clifford Boxes business is located at Peter's house in his garage/workshop.



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As we walked up the hill to the work site we passed Peter's large garden and saw his house, which, not surprisingly, he heats with firewood from Clifford Lumber.


A fourth Gardner enterprise is being a landlord. A portion of their land is zoned for industry, and the Gardners have developed it into a small industrial park. Their tenants include a well and pump business, a recycler of scrap metal, and a trailer sales business.

Raising three children in the country, the Gardners have had a menagerie of animals over the years: several horses and ponies, chickens, dogs, and cats. The most memorable was their pig Babe. Not confined to a pen, she nevertheless stayed close to home, except when Lynn was away, and then she wandered off to look for her. Babe liked to visit the nearby gas station. Customers sometimes became frightened when approached by this tame but enormous sow, so the gas station owner would call Marie to come get her pig. Now the Gardners' livestock has dwindled to a few chickens and Peter's dog, making it easier for the Gardners to get away for much-needed, staggered vacations during the slower winter months. First Peter and David will visit Amanda just after Christmas, then Lynn and Marie are off to Costa Rica in February to spend time with their daughter, and then the partners are all home again to attend to the family business(es).

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