

# Blue Sky Building & Design

Making the Average Exceptional  
and the Exceptional Affordable

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modern traditional homes with optimal usage of space, floor plans of designed convenience, and simple yet creative additions and alterations. Olsen has a gift for designing and adding these simple, affordable design elements that dramatically enhance his handiwork. Take the Empire Cottage on page 78 as evidence of Olsen's creative concepts. The vaulted ceilings, open fireplace and a total of nine custom storage closets give this 1,400-square-foot cottage an aura of boundless space.

Not part of the original plans, the simple and unique ceilings of the kitchen and bedroom were Olsen's clever stroke. This ingenious addition is made of two-by-fours straight from the lumberyard nailed to the drywall ceiling and spray-painted white. The effect was beyond

what Olsen had even imagined, adding character, depth and personality to an otherwise ordinary room.

"That's what it's all about," says Olsen. "Coming up with creative ways to make something unique without raising cost."

He accomplishes this by using materials like the under-a-dollar-per-square-foot industrial VCT tile flooring of contrasting colors in a bathroom, as shown on page 79; or adding ornamental batten strips from leftover supplies to enliven a lackluster wall above a fireplace mantle, as evidenced on page 80. Simple and affordable touches like these add distinction to the common, rustic to the unadorned, and space to the confined.

This same utilitarian creativity was put to work in remodeling Olsen and wife Samantha's weekend getaway cabin shown on page 79. Purchased as a remodel project and affectionately named Betty Lou, this 550-square-foot fixer-upper is tucked snugly on the banks of Spider Lake just outside of Traverse City.

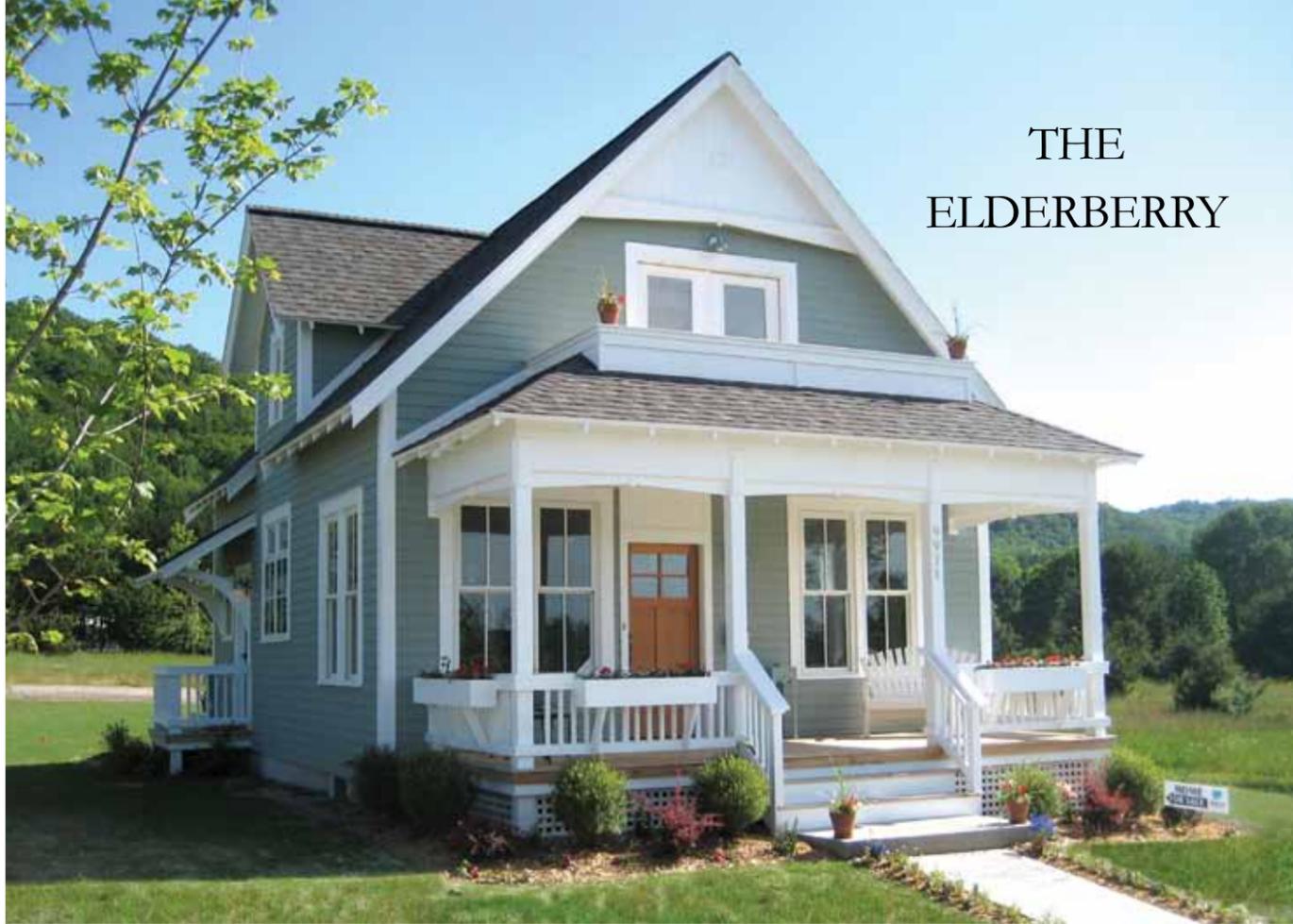
**e**ric Olsen, owner and founder of Blue Sky Building & Design, started his residential construction business a few years after receiving a degree in Architectural Design from the University of Kentucky.

During his second year of school, he and his wife bought a small house in Lexington, Kentucky. "We had so much fun in remodeling and fixing it up," says Olsen. "Then in the summers, I decided to do construction work. By the time I got out of college, I was having more fun with the hands-on side of it."

He's never looked back. He is fully capable of planning and constructing a home from the first pencil marks on the plans to the final finish on the doorknobs. Olsen has found in recent years, however, that by leaving the overall structural designing to someone else, he has more time to focus on customized details like exterior trim, interior design and crew management.

Blue Sky Building & Design has a reputation for building

## THE ELDERBERRY



The couple used what Olsen describes as the “free or flea” method for the reconstruction process—meaning everything they used was either found, donated or bought at some form of flea market or resale shop. The outcome is staggering. Considering Olsen’s supernatural knack for creating space where there is none, it should be no surprise that the minuscule Betty Lou sleeps 10. She is a conglomeration of relics and treasures like a Craftsman-style front door leftover from a Blue Sky job; a \$200 skylight snagged from Odom Re-Use in Traverse City; a 1950’s refrigerator refurbished by a friend; a cupola found at a yard sale.

The ultimate DIY project is quintessential Olsen and Blue Sky Building and Design.

“We have a niche in smaller, well-designed homes, and only take on jobs that interest us,” says Olsen.

Olsen makes the mundane unique and the impossible affordable, and people have noticed. Which people? Blue Sky Building & Design is the winner of the Home Builders Association 2014 Parade of Homes People’s Choice Award, as well as runner-up of the Craftsmanship Award, in the \$475,000 to \$650,000 range in the Grand Traverse Area. Hope he’s ready for an influx of interesting jobs. □



### Home Exterior

Fiber cement siding with wood trim.

### Living Room

Old-fashioned gas stove flanked by custom bookshelves.

### Stairwell

Includes midway reading nook and jump-off landing to a single bedroom.



**HANSEL AND GRETEL**  
Tower with music room connects Olsen’s original 1,300-square-foot home to the new addition.



## THE MADRONA

**Bathroom**  
Industrial CVT tile for stately and affordable style.

**Kitchen**  
Ornamental batten strips on ceiling are a product of Olsen's "Design on the fly."



## EMPIRE COTTAGE

**Dining Room**  
Two-sided fireplace provides minimal room separation for a spacious feel.

**Kitchen**  
Galley kitchen utilizes space and implement simple style.

**Bedroom**  
Decorational rafters of number 2 pine from lumberyard.



## BETTY LOU

**Den**  
Ladder found on the roadside easily raised with a custom rope-and-pulley design.

# CONTEMPORARY COUNTRY

Barn Red fiber cement siding and Split Face masonry chimney and mudroom.



## TALL WHITE HOUSE

Shiplap pine siding with wainscot base trim.



## Blue Sky Building & Design

PRINCIPAL OWNER: Eric W. Olsen, President

YEARS IN BUSINESS: 21

YEAR BUSINESS STARTED: 1993

### EDUCATION:

Eric attended the University of Kentucky's College of Architecture and attended Northwestern Michigan College for Graphic Design.

### BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY:

We take on a select number of projects per year that are interesting and in line with our design and building philosophy, which is building with the smart use of space, energy efficient practices, and aesthetically pleasing design. Importance is placed on using the best and most sustainable products available, while still managing to be as competitive in the market place as possible and making great customer service a priority. Keeping the number of projects to a manageable number helps us immensely with the level of service and attention to detail we are able to provide.

### WHAT SETS YOUR BUSINESS APART?

We are able to provide design services and follow the project from its inception through completion using trusted craftspeople. We also are able to do pre-purchase site analyses for customers who are looking at a certain piece of property and give them insight into what building on that site may entail.

### HOBBIES, VOLUNTEERISM, ETC.:

People should know that when they select Blue Sky as their builder, Eric will personally be on their job site every day to make sure things go as smoothly as possible. Beyond that, Eric enjoys being outdoors as much as possible, including skiing and mountain biking with family and friends.

### CONTACT PHONE NUMBER & WEBSITE:

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## 1919 SEARS AND ROEBUCK REPLICA

Original stone base and foundation used for new construction after fire totalled original.



## WOODSTONE

Gas fireplace, cedar mantle, custom bookshelves and a dedication to cottage-style living.