



Ed Wichert stands in the middle of his cherry orchard on the Old Mission Peninsula as the cherry picking crews and machinery go to work. He did better than he anticipated on the price for his "sour" — not bad for a brand new gentleman cherry farmer.

Changing careers, locations



By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

OLD MISSION Peninsula is a long finger of land stretching north out into Grand Traverse Bay from Traverse City.

The pleasant residences along the roads going out from town grow sparser as the distance increases and manicured yards resplendent with trees, shrubs and flowers give way to orchards of apples, cherries (sweets and sour), plums, apricots (honest), vineyards

and fields of raspberry bushes that flourish in the sandy loam that covers the rolling hills.

The peninsula has a unique identity and heritage that becomes more pronounced in the rural section heading toward the sleepy little crossroads of Mapleton and Old Mission, past tiny cemeteries, country schools, vineyards, fruit stands and, toward the tip, small, public beaches snuggled into the shoreline.

Once Ed and Lou Wichert caught sight of the slate blue frame house on a ridge with a view of East Bay, they knew it was meant for them.

"Last August, we decided to take a couple of days to explore the Traverse City area for a place to go. We ran into this place, spent an hour, made an offer on Monday, and Tuesday it was accepted. We took possession Labor Day weekend."



Ed and Lou Wichert like to talk about the differences in their lives since they moved upstate saying they are more in tune with nature and the natural forces of climate and changing seasons.

Staff photos by
Stephen Cantrell

ness — gradually buying and refinishing furniture and building up a clientele.

But once the move was completed, Ed said smiling, "We're doing all the things we said we weren't going to do — work on the house, learn the antiques business and learn how to run cherry orchards."

The 700 sour cherry trees came with the house — they have several rows of trees along the one-track

dirt lane leading up the hill to their house and more down the east slope.

The former owner was there last

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Ed Wichert begins to refinish an antique table with the colorful hollyhocks beside the house as a backdrop.

THEY SOLD THEIR house in West Bloomfield in October and moved north in April. In fact, they moved over a number of weeks, driving truckloads of furniture — their own and that slated for sale in their antiques business.

After he retired from the Bloomfield Hills school system, they had planned to live at a more leisurely pace, expanding the antique busi-

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View of the bay and half the pay

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer



For the next couple of weeks, you'll be seeing stories with an "Upstate" logo on them.

Why "Upstate?" Well, that's the term the folks in the northern part of the Lower Peninsula use when they talk about where they live as opposed to "downstate," which is where we live and work. And we wanted to find out why they decided to go north and how they like it.

When they come "downstate" it's to see Tiger games, go to the Meadow Brook Music Festival, visit friends and relatives, see the sights of the big city, catch a transatlantic flight at Metro Airport or grab a look on the way to Florida.

Maybe that's the wonder and vitality of Michigan, it's so diverse, you can find almost any lifestyle you want.

LESS THAN a week in the Traverse City area, touring, interviewing and talking to people along the Old Mission and Leelanau peninsulas and I was ready to cash out the IRAs and put a down payment on a mini cherry

ry orchard. The enthusiasm about the quality of life and the time to enjoy it is contagious.

To a person, those who migrated north have made a concerted effort to combat loneliness by becoming involved in special interest groups and volunteer projects.

After my friends, Charlie and Lynn Allerton Quick moved to Traverse City 19 years ago from Beverly Hills, she taught needlepoint classes, did volunteer work, joined the Quakers (antique group), worked part time at the Antique Barn on the Old Mission Peninsula and chaired several quilt shows put on by the Quakers to aid the restoration of the old opera house.

Charlie joined Power Squadron.

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Baskets carry her into new life

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

Laurie Hirt didn't choose to move to Suttons Bay on the Leelanau Peninsula. She liked living in the busy subdivision in Auburn Hills.

But as the wife of a Lutheran minister, she knows that moving is a part of the profession. So when he accepted an offer with a church in Suttons Bay and Northport, seven months ago, she packed up the household furnishings, children Robbie, 5, and Bethany, 8, said goodbye to neighbors and friends and started north.

"My daughter couldn't understand why there weren't 50 kids her age around here to play with. Now her friends live on farms and now she plays with all ages rather than just 8 year olds."

"It took a while to get used to the different way of life, but now it would be hard to go back," she said. One thing Hirt took with her that has helped smooth the transition is her skill in basketmaking. "I learned from a friend downstate who took lessons at Cranbrook," she said. And while there are lots



STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

Laurie Hirt is cutting splints for baskets. At left in front are two sizes of Nantucket baskets, one of her specialties and at right is the

mold she uses to make them. She dyes the reeds for the Appalachian egg basket at left with the god's eye at the base of the handle.