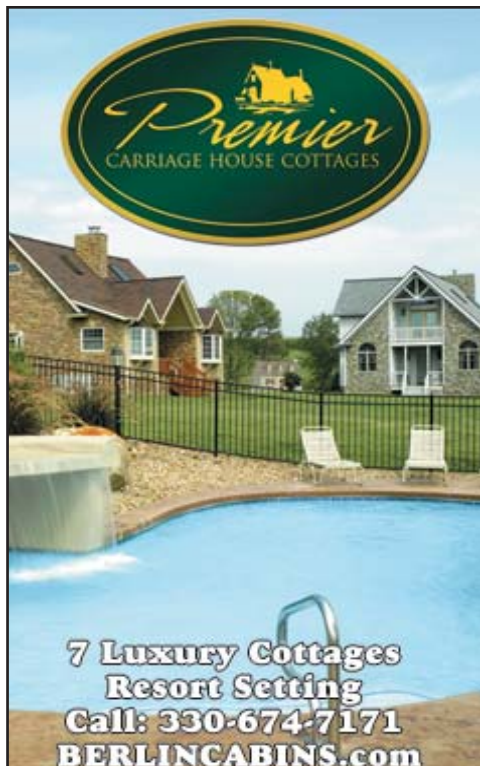


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**Pleasant View Furniture -
Simple Roots, Sophisticated Designs**



By Mark Weaver

There are busy days in the heart of Amish Country when it's easy to forget that this is a community known for a slower, simpler lifestyle. For visitors moving right along in the bustle of downtown Berlin, it's good to know peace and quiet is just minutes away.

Three miles from that busyness, just off U.S. 62, sits a picture-perfect example of the contented life. It's an impeccably maintained Amish homestead, a simple white two story house, the attached daudy haus, all surrounded by flowers, shrubs, and lush grass, against the backdrop of a white barn and rolling fields.

Tucked in alongside this homestead is the simple building that housed Pleasant View

Furniture. Started by an Amish family in 1990, it grew from a small furniture building shop to a 7,000-square-foot showcase of Amish-made wood furniture.

But a simple building on a picturesque homestead doesn't mean plain furniture. While the Amish hold to their traditional lifestyle, their furniture production has kept pace with the demands of modern homeowners. For Pleasant View Furniture owner Leroy Keim, it's a simple matter of responding to the marketplace. "Fifteen years ago, most of the furniture was oak," he said as he gestured to a honey color dining table. Now brown maple is the best seller, and the variety in their showroom reflects how much has changed.

Keim, who took over the family business in 2002, is a modest man, in speech, in manner, and lifestyle. But he knows what's important to him as a businessman. "The highlight, for me, is when a customer returns after receiving a custom-made piece of furniture, and tells me how happy he is with what he bought. That's the best thing about being in the furniture business."

These days you'll see a wide selection of wood species, colors, and styles. Although

the company doesn't stray too far from its traditional roots, they carry a range of styles including Mission, Shaker, Queen Anne, and more modern styles. Colors range from natural to an espresso tone, and include painted or distressed finishes. Besides brown maple and oak, choices include different types of cherry, maple, hickory and elm.

Keim has seen a change in customers' expectations in the last few years. Where people used to buy a standard piece displayed in the store, about 70 percent of their sales are now custom work. That can be as complex as designing a piece from scratch, with nothing more to work from than the picture in the customer's mind. Keim describes combining different design elements a customer has seen, or working from a picture in a magazine.

Keim's background in custom residential and commercial construction, as well as the family's furniture manufacturing business, gives him the experience needed to communicate with customers about their design ideas, and how best to satisfy them. Keim said, "When you've worked with the manufacturing of furniture, you know what you can do to customize it."

Their response to customer's needs has gained notice across the country. While about 80 percent of their sales are in Ohio and surrounding states, Keim said their furniture has gone to about every other state and Canada.

A custom elm bedroom set for a motorcycle enthusiast has Harley-Davidson engraved in huge script on the footboard. A pastor in Colorado ordered a six foot round dining room table in quarter sawn oak, which expands to 14 feet long. A collector of antique chest of drawers wanted two specific Amish made pieces in bird's eye maple

and curly maple. "The people who buy furniture there appreciate things made in the U.S.A.," said Keim. "They appreciate solid wood, and they realize that every piece of wood looks a little different."

While Keim's family maintains a separate manufacturing facility that produces some of their bedroom sets, Pleasant View's selection comes from almost 100 different suppliers, each and every one of them local craftsmen. Besides bedroom sets, Pleasant View carries furniture for the dining room, office, and nursery, as well as tables, entertainment centers and more for the rest of the house.

Pleasant View Furniture's commitment to customer satisfaction is unwavering, with a 15-day return policy on anything a customer is not happy with. In this simple building on this beautiful farm, one truth remains first and foremost to Pleasant View Furniture and Leroy Keim. "If you don't have happy customers, it doesn't mean anything."

