

Business with national scope

OakBridge Timber Framing based in area

By JIM BREWER
Times Editor

Tucked on a township road so remote it is hardly noticed is a company with a national scope.

OakBridge Timber Framing Ltd. produces handcrafted oak framing materials as a primary subcontractor for homebuilders. Homes, including OakBridge timbers, have been built as far away as Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico.

The company was founded in 1986 in Howard on Earnest Road off Nunda Road and Ohio 3 not far from Amity. In 1995, owner Johnny Miller bought property on Washington Township northeast of Loudonville and built a home there first and then a new shop.

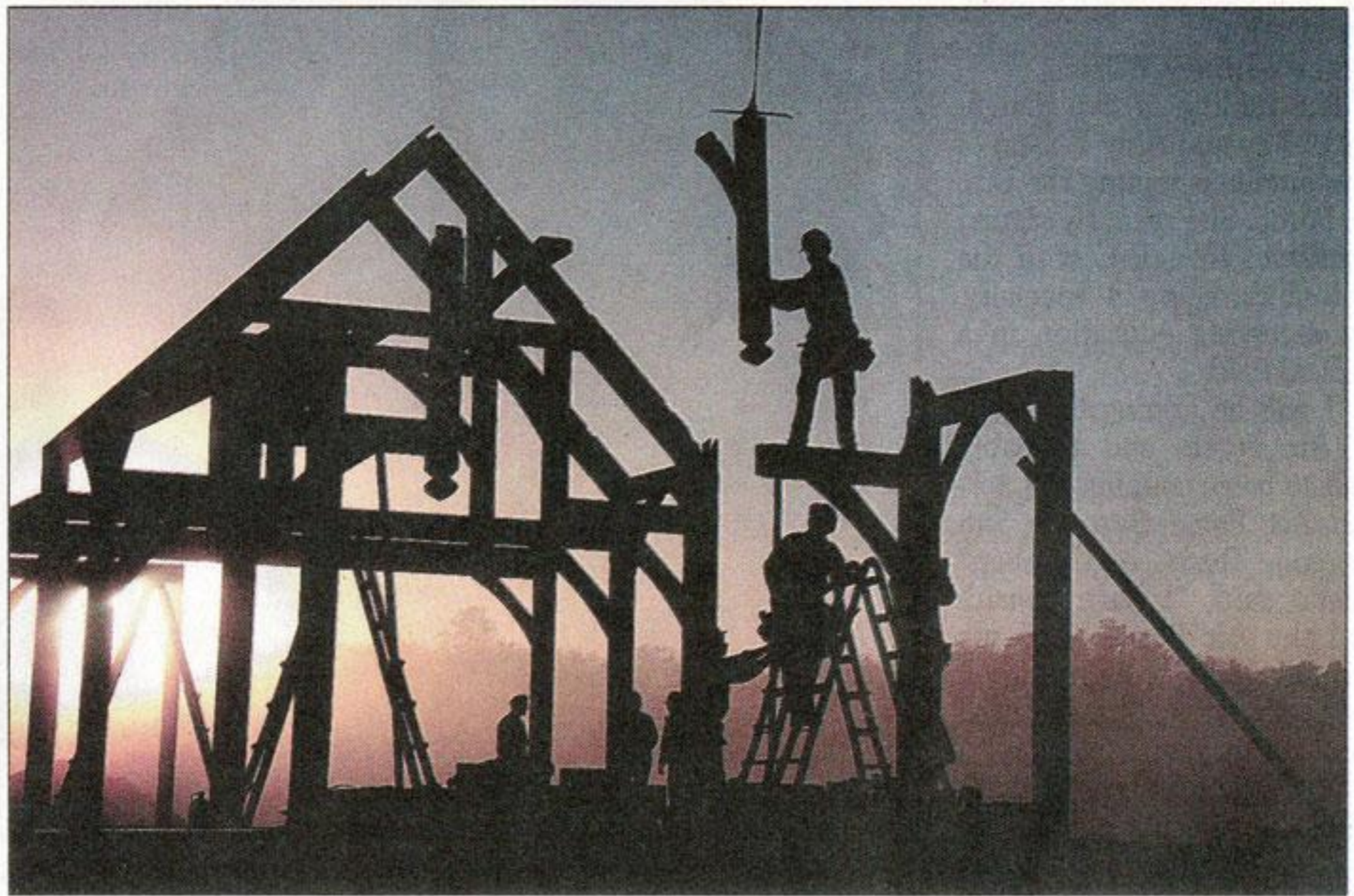
He and partners also have interest in another shop in South Erie, Pa.

Historically, OakBridge is linked to Hochstetler Milling about 3 miles northwest in McKay.

"Levi Hochstetler and I started in business together," Miller said, "but around 1993, because he was so busy in his log home framing business, we split, with me concentrating on developing our oak timber frame products."

Miller calls himself the general manager and marketing specialist for the firm, which involves seven employees, all family. His father, 73, and 18-year-old son are primary woodworkers, along with a younger son, while his daughter, 19, handles the bookkeeping, estimating and other office work. He also has two brothers and a cousin involved in the work.

"We buy all of our oak timber material from Hochstetler



Submitted photo

Crewmen from OakBridge Timber Framing, located just east of Loudonville, create a dramatic view in this sunrise photo of them on a worksite.

Milling, which provides us with great service and top-quality structurally graded materials," Miller said.

His timber framing products include open structural beams and timber frames, along with both curved and straight beams, all of which are included in an overall home design.

Homes built with OakBridge framing materials reflect back to a time when homes were built to last for generations. Constructed of massive timbers and secured with pegged mortise and tenon joinery, a distinctive architectural space was created with large, light-filled rooms, vaulted ceilings and intimate lofts. Lines were classic and simple; interiors clean and contemporary.

The philosophy of OakBridge Timber Framing is to continue that tradition of spaciousness, durability and craftsmanship with the modern improvement of structural insulated panels at the walls and roof, energy-efficient windows and doors and other conveniences of 21st-century housing. Their installations of oak involve skilled

joiners carefully handcrafting each timber with hand tools, enabling exactness of cuts and precision in the joinery. The finished product is a work of art.

OakBridge designers plan a customer's home to reflect his or her style, personality and lifestyle. Homes not only satisfy the basic need for shelter, but entice the senses with aesthetically interesting spaces.

"While we do most of the cutting, shaping and finishing of our product here in our Loudonville plant, we also often take the entire crew to the home site to do the installation," Miller said. "That way, it keeps everyone interested, not like we are just working in a factory, but at the site with the customer, too, giving us a better understanding of what our end product looks like and what our customers want."

He describes the firm as a subcontractor for quality home builders and lists his market as all across the U.S. and Canada.

"We will work with contractors across the country, providing manufacture and

installation of attractive interior beams for homebuilders in both the U.S. and Canada," Miller said.

One interesting facet of his work is the variation on building rules and regulations.

"We have done quite a few homes in the Chicago area, where the building codes are extremely stringent, and have done others in rural southern Ohio, where there are practically no rules at all," Miller said.

A visual highlight of the OakBridge tradition of construction excellence was highlighted in Timber Homes Illustrated magazine, a guide to classic wood homes, where photos of an OakBridge framed home built in the mountains of Montana, the beautiful finished oak timbers offering a dramatic contrast to snow covered mountains in the background.

To see more photos of OakBridge Timber Framing products, visit www.oakbridgetimberframing.com, and for more information, call 866-599-5711, or 740-599-5711.