



**Story by Daniel Downey**

**Photos by Daniel Henninger**





# Building a Name

**Embracing tradition, quality and a new sense of community**

How do you build a tradition in an age of mass production? Where do consumers find true craftsmen, and craftsmanship in a home? Word is that they talk to Ed Hatcher, president and owner of Hatcher Homes.

Hatcher Homes, founded in 1997, has built on a tradition of excellence dating back more than eighty years. Not that Hatcher Homes has been building for eighty years, Ed Hatcher himself is not quite half a century old, but the traditions by which he and his crew of like-minded, passionate associates work are a revival of turn of the twentieth century style and detail. The rapidly expanding reputation of Hatcher homes in Northeast Georgia has as much to do with the homes and neighborhoods being built by this third generation builder as with his scripture based business ethic.

“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold,” reads Proverbs 22:1. Ed Hatcher and Hatcher Homes continue to build upon the name Hatcher Homes has established, because for Ed, “it’s not all about building.” Each Hatcher home is built, as his business has been, with integrity and a keen eye for design.

Hatcher Homes builds more than just quality homes; they build communities. By embracing what has been coined the “new urbanism,” and blending this with the tradition of Craftsman style homes, Ed Hatcher is building good neighbors and friends, bringing people together and revitalizing areas that have otherwise been forgotten. Every one of his projects is a model of stewardship and civic responsibility.

Part of the appeal of the Hatcher homes is the location. Built in established areas, Hatcher homes are constructed using the existing infrastructure. The style of the homes is reminiscent of the 1920’s Craftsman homes already or originally in these areas. After rebuilding neighborhoods with Hatcher Homes, neighbors have approached city officials curious to know who had been “remodeling these old homes.” “And that is the biggest compliment we could receive,” beams Hatcher. Other, more frequent compliments result from the Hatcher Homes’ sense of community responsibility and the fervent, almost cult-like, interest in the Hatcher product line.

Hatcher Homes offer the unique architectural options that foster close-knit communities, options that other builders have recently begun to emulate based on the successes of



Hatcher Homes. From the very crawlspaces upon which Hatcher homes are built, Ed Hatcher and his crew embrace the traditions of the Craftsman bungalow while capitalizing on modern technology to develop certified Earth Craft homes. The distinctive Craftsman style bungalows offer, among other traditional amenities that foster the feeling of community, front porches spanning the length of most models. The Fulton, one of the more popular Hatcher models, boasts incredibly inviting ten-foot-deep front porch, on the first and second floors.

Hatcher relates one anecdote about a homebuyer who, living in a Cobb County cul-de-sac subdivision for more than six years, never knew any neighbors except the ones living to either side. After moving into a Hatcher home, this client, after only a short while, knew everyone in the neighborhood, thanks in part to the style and tradition Ed and his design team have embraced. Homes built on existing thoroughfares invite much sought after community interaction. "We pull the homes closer to the street," says Hatcher. Knowing your neighbors also means they'll come calling, at least that is the tradition. Hatcher homes provide this invitation, by design. "Each of our homes has an inviting front door and a back door that doesn't open into the garage."

Growing up in middle Georgia in the 1950's and 60's, everyone Ed knew "used the back door." It is amidst the traditions of middle Georgia, a place relatively untainted by modern social mores, where his father and grandfather were both builders, that Ed, with homebuilding in his blood, formulated his notion of a home and a neighborhood. Both this paternal influence and this traditional upbringing profoundly influenced Hatcher's operations and aspirations. This influence would lie relatively latent until many years out of college.

After graduating from Southern Polytechnic University with a degree in Architecture, Ed set to work for Chick-fil-A, building the facilities for the expanding restaurant chain. "I really appreciated the creative aspect of architecture, but I knew I couldn't sit behind a desk," offers Ed, when relating his history. A good many years passed before Ed would start Hatcher Homes, with just "me and a pick-up-truck." As a one-man-show, Ed would do his own punch out, repair silt fences and go home at night to write the







checks, all after nearly eighteen years in the industrial and restaurant construction business. Hatcher Homes now has seven full-time employees and works directly with an exclusive mortgage broker and real estate agent. And the rest is history, in the making.

His first homes, in Concord Walk, are not far from some of his latest developments in Spring Street Village and Highland Walk. "I've got a five or ten minute commute every day," says Ed. "This is where we hang our shingle." Having lived in Cobb County since 1976, who better to head the Cobb County Chapter of the Home Builders Association than Ed Hatcher, as he works to revitalize these neighborhoods and turn these often forgotten "stepsister" areas into "Cinderella" communities, as he likes to call them. Ed and Hatcher Homes work hand-in-hand with communities to build homes of distinction, homes that neighbors and homebuyers can get behind. Traditional homes.



"We know our market," offers Hatcher and are "driven by neighborhood activism." All of the Hatcher Homes projects strive to "bring folks in the area along," offering amenities and accents that fit the neighborhoods and the discerning homebuyers he caters to. "A lot goes into the look of our homes," asserts Hatcher, who has employed his old classmate and Craftsman specialist, Dale Peek, of

the Peek Design group, to design and revive this new Craftsman tradition. "We are a boutique builder," Hatcher states. "We offer perceived value." Hatcher considers most of his clients as particularly image conscious, conscious of what they drive and what they live in. "With Hatcher Homes, they don't get the big box with the square footage. We are not a tract builder."



What consumers get are quality homes. “If you buy a base home, you buy a very nice home. We build primarily on crawl spaces, which is uncommon anymore, or basements, and are trying to replicate what was built eighty years ago, with hardwood and trim packages.” Hatcher Homes are also Earth Craft certified, meaning each home is subject to a series of rigorous tests to ensure that each reaches a certain, high standard of energy efficiency and environmental sensibility. Earth Craft diagnostic technicians have claimed that Hatcher Homes, when subject to the rigorous blower-door compliance tests, are “some of the tightest homes.” The advantages of Earth Craft homes, for energy efficiency and indoor air quality are remarkable, and all this is just an added bonus.

“Just about every square foot of our homes is useful space,” asserts Hatcher. With walk-up attics that can be turned into master retreats or studies, and a number of plans including optional quarters over the garage, Hatcher homes offer an uncommon value for the price. And, as the prices of the homes have risen, the homes “have evolved, with larger homes and more space with Craftsman style.”

Floor plans are not the only thing evolving, where Hatcher Homes are concerned. As President of the Cobb County Home Builders Association, Ed is working with county government officials in an effort to revitalize this

sense of community. His goals and the larger goals of the HBA are to begin dialogues with the smaller cities and reclaim some of the areas that have been lost.

With twenty homes slated for construction this year, and forty more in the works for the next year, Cobb County and the surrounding area will most assuredly see the revitalization sparked by the efforts of Hatcher Homes. And if the quality of the homes is not obvious from the outside, the distinctive streetscapes and hardscapes offered as standard in all Hatcher homes will serve as a sure indicator of superior quality and value.

Word travels fast in this industry, and the good name of Hatcher Homes has traveled much the same. In little over eight years, the renown and quality reputation of Ed Hatcher and Hatcher Homes has led to chance encounters between happy Hatcher homeowners as far away as the San Francisco bay. As a man of his word, the region can most certainly count on the continued revitalization that Ed Hatcher aspires too. So, as the front porches creep ever closer towards the sidewalks, and the back doors swing wide, inviting guests in for pie and conversation, chances are that folks will be discussing Ed Hatcher, the man who brought these neighbors, these communities and these cities together, one home and one neighborhood at a time. **E**

—Daniel Downey  
December 2004