

ON LOCATION
MOUNT TREMPER, N.Y.

Uprooting for a Simpler Life Takes Work

A couple left Washington in 2018 and took a chance on a ramshackle Catskills property.

By TIM McKEOUGH

When Sharon Lipovsky and Colin Phillips left the Washington area to pursue the dream of a bucolic life in the country, they were ahead of the curve. It was 2018, long before the pandemic hit, and few companies were telling their employees they could work from anywhere but the office.

Before retreating into the woods became a trend, the couple, who have three children — Henrietta, now 9, Crosley, 7, and Iggy, 5 — realized that a drastic change of lifestyle might be possible for them. Ms. Lipovsky, an executive coach, could run her business, Point Road Studios, from a laptop, and Mr. Phillips, who works in communications for the Transportation Security Administration, predicted (correctly) that his employer would be open to a remote working arrangement.

After spending a few weeks each summer at Mr. Phillips's family camp in the Adirondacks, the couple were smitten with upstate New York. "It's a place where the important things come forward," Ms. Lipovsky, 41, said. "You're in nature, you're with family, you're resting, you're eating well, you're gardening. It's just a really lovely, magical place. We thought, 'Why can't we have more of this, all of the time?'"

But after making a stop in the Catskills during one of their annual pilgrimages, they realized they liked that area even more than the Adirondacks — a similar sense of escapism, but with an undercurrent of creative energy.

Back home, Ms. Lipovsky pored over real estate listings late into the night until she found a property that put an end to her scrolling. It was a five-acre lot in an Ulster County hamlet called Mount Tremper, with three main structures (not including the smaller buildings for chickens, goats and birds): a ramshackle cottage, a rustic cabin and an octagonal building that was once a preschool.

The weathered buildings appeared to need extensive work, but Ms. Lipovsky couldn't resist sharing the listing with Mr. Phillips. "It was the second time in my life when my wife woke me up in the middle of the night with some real estate site and said, 'Hey, this is our house,'" Mr. Phillips, 41, said. "And both times, we've lived in those houses."

Sure enough, when they finally visited the property a few months later, it looked ideal. And it helped that one of Ms.



TINY CERCULA/THE NEW YORK TIMES



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'We look at our house and say, "Wow, that's