

“Even a Blind Sow Picks Up an Acorn Once in a While”

Such was one of my father’s many favorite “go-to” lines when my brother and I were growing up, this one usually applied to a situation where one of us had gotten lucky about something in spite of ourselves. Actually, come to think of it, he *still* uses the line on me once in a while. Well, the recent spring issue certainly provided an opportunity to apply this “pearl” of wisdom. Let me explain . . .

With every issue of *Western New York Heritage* we produce, the various text files, layouts and proofs go through numerous proofreading stages, being scrutinized by numerous pairs of eyes in the process. And overall, I am very proud of the fact that a pretty small number of typos or other “boo-boos” sneak their way into our pages because of this scrutiny. But this past spring issue was one of those occasions where, inexplicably, a typo occurred that still has us scratching our heads. On page 48, in Stephen Kellogg’s excellent piece on John Lord O’Brian, a sentence *should have* stated that, while working on the War Production Board during World War II, O’Brian worked with some of the best and brightest, including “lawyers, leaders in industry and labor, engineers, cabinet members and politicians.” But even though the original text file clearly stated “cabinet members,” in the final published copy somehow the text was changed to read “cabinet *makers*.” Oops . . .

Here is where the “acorn” comes in. Steve was quick to point out the typo in his article, but a follow up conversation with others discovered that while the final wording was unintentional, it was, in fact, accurate after all. And not just accurate – but accurate with a further Western New York connection!

Buffalo’s world-renowned Kittinger Furniture Company was founded as a paper factory in 1866 by George and Oliver Colie, but the pair soon began to produce upholstered furniture. When George’s son-in-law, Irvine Kittinger, took over the furniture business, the name of the firm was changed to The Kittinger Furniture Company. Through the years, Kittinger furniture became synonymous with high quality, hand-crafted designs that have even graced the rooms of the White House and other government chambers. Sold by the Kittinger family to General Interiors Corporation in 1966, the company went through several owners before Ray and Karen Bialkowski purchased it in the mid-1990s, reestablishing the firm in Buffalo.

Like many manufacturing concerns in Western New York and beyond, however, The Kittinger Furniture Company contributed in no small way to the Allied victory in World War II by switching their production from high-end furniture to aircraft parts. Throughout the war years, the company ran three



ANNOUNCING
WAR
Killinger Reproductions
1943 VICTORY PERIOD

The most valuable contribution the Kittinger Company can make at this time . . . located as we are in a critical labor area . . . is to use our manpower on projects directly identified with the war effort.

The Niagara Frontier is one of the great aircraft production centers of the world. Expansion has progressed at a tremendous pace. There are ways in which our facilities can be of greater service to all than continuing the production of furniture under these unusual conditions.

We are therefore postponing the manufacture of Kittinger Furniture and Williamsburg Restoration Reproductions until this situation changes.

Comments from the trade indicate that our action is being received with understanding . . . for under present conditions, furniture making could continue only to the accompaniment of disappointments, delayed deliveries and unfilled orders. We believe our new program will help speed the day when we can devote ALL of our efforts and services to you and your customers.

KITTINGER
BUFFALO NEW YORK CHICAGO

This Kittinger Furniture Company advertisement appeared in the April 1943 issue of *Interiors* magazine, and explained the company’s shift from the manufacture of furniture to aircraft parts.

shifts from their Elmwood Avenue plant, for which effort they were awarded both the Army and Navy “E.”

As such, Kittinger, and others like them, would have come under the supervision of the War Production Board – and one John Lord O’Brian. Thus, O’Brian did, indeed, work with the best and brightest during his time with the board – including the world-class “cabinet makers” at Buffalo’s Kittinger Furniture Company. Thanks to Steve Kellogg and his associates, we not only nailed a potential typo, but are able to share this important additional piece of Western New York’s heritage with our readers this issue. We hope you enjoyed reading about this “acorn.”