

# GIBBARD FURNITURE COMPANY (con 4)

By Jack Evans  
The Intelligencer

**NAPANEE** — What is survival?

How about staying in business for generations despite two major fires and a bankruptcy?

Not only has this town's historic Gibbard Furniture Company survived those setbacks, it has thrived.

Now in its 162nd year — having been founded in 1835 by cabinet maker John Gibbard — the plant continues to operate from its original location on the bank of the Napanee River.

The bankruptcy, in 1939, led to the company being taken over by Bruce McPherson, a former sales manager whose family continues to operate the 160-employee business.

Apart from shrewd management over many decades, there are two main reasons for the company's continuing success.

One is its long-time tradition of peerless quality, specializing in furniture lines of two top types of wood — cherry and Honduras mahogany.

The second is generic: mankind's ancient love affair with crafted wood. From primitive weapons to pioneer utensils to precision-crafted furniture masterpieces, most people simply love beautiful woodwork.

Jack McPherson, plant manager, explained: "We buy the best quality wood we can get, and then we grade it again to our own specifications after that."

"The wood is air-dried on the lot but we also have our own kiln to bring the moisture content down to our specifications. That process alone can take 28 days."

Laser-guided saws handled by skilled workers make maximum use of the grains and quality of each board. Delicate patterns,

produced by the company's resident design artist, see pieces secured with such precision that a door or a table top, for instance — which can expand or contract in size by up to a quarter on an inch — remains a snug and working fit despite variations in temperature and climate.

The polish on a Gibbard table top or chest is something else. "That alone is a 28-step process," said McPherson, involving sanding, staining, special-

ized varnishes and other protective products, plus mirror-finish polishing.

One of the company's

because of the price. They buy one piece at a time, and we accommodate that market by running our

**'We even used to have a channel from the Napanee River run under the plant for power for early water-powered saw mills'**

newest lines is called Quinte Loyalist, said McPherson, and it has already established itself as a popular style.

"People usually don't buy a whole suite at once

lines for a long time," he said.

Cost of a typical nine-piece dining room suite, for instance, is \$11,000.

He added that fine quality furniture is a lifetime

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