

Luxury, BOXED

If Naughty, No Way, If Nice, Expect Gift In A Burt Rigid Box

By LIBBY CUDMORE

ONEONTA

That box of Godiva chocolate, or the ones holding a bottle of Jack Daniels or vial of Chanel No. 5 will appear under Christmas trees across the U.S. on Dec. 25.

But those boxes were fabricated right here in Oneonta's West End at the Burt Rigid Box plant on Browne Street. "We're a best-kept secret," said Greg Ward, operations manager.

But make no mistake - these aren't boring brown cardboard. A rigid box is made of heavy, stiff paper, then wrapped in a fine quality paper or cloth, stamped, embossed or otherwise decorated as a showcase for the product.

The company got its start as a printing house in 1886 in Buffalo as the F.N. Burt

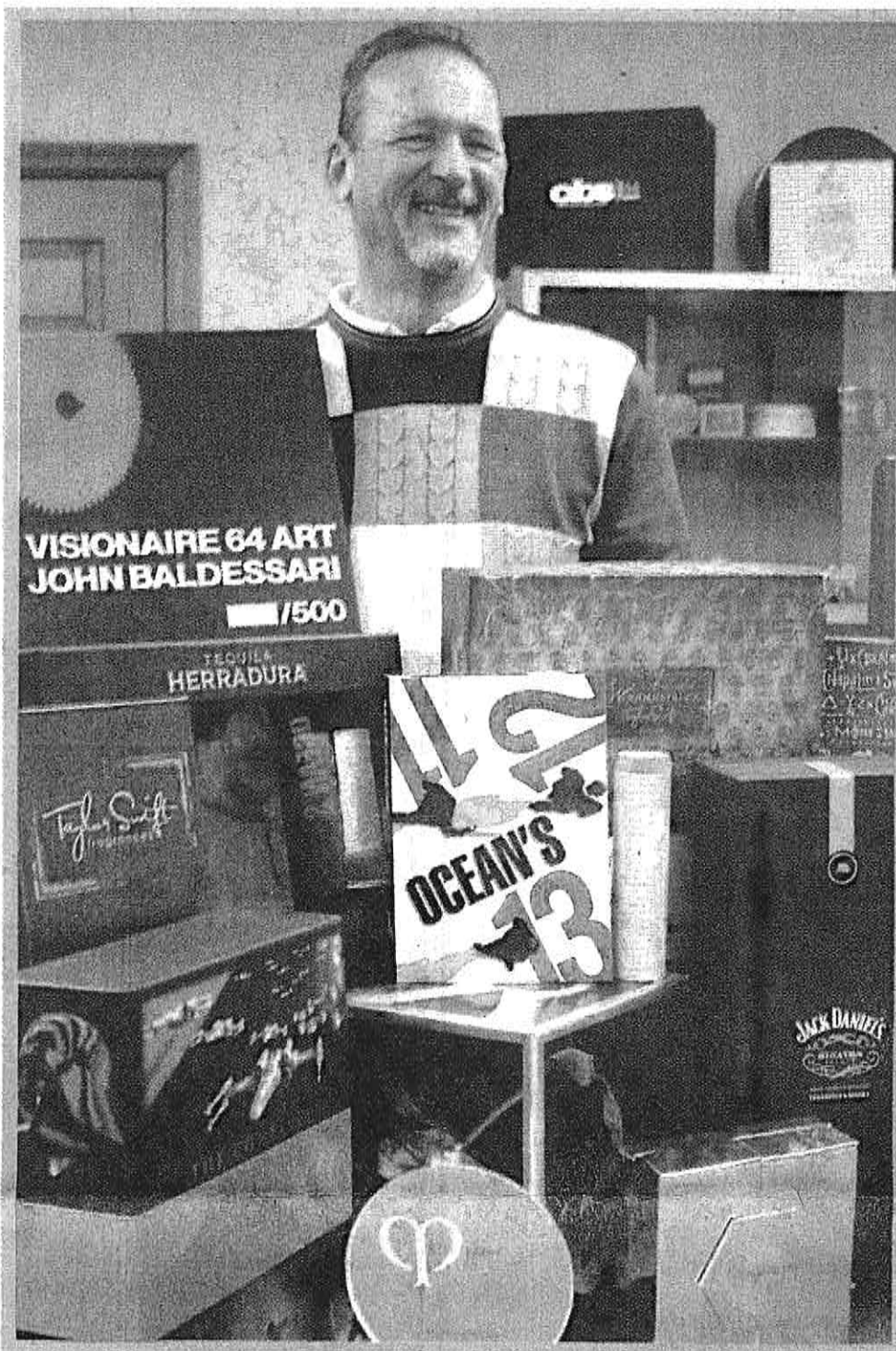


Daniel Hewlitt, Dtego, inspects the golden Godiva chocolate boxes.

Company, but quickly diversified into drugstore pillboxes and later, cigarette boxes. "At one point, we made 95 percent of all Phillip Morris' boxes," said Ward. "To this day, we still make boxes for heir English Ovals cigarettes."

In the 1930s, Burt invented and patented round and oval box makers, which came in handy during World War II rationing, replacing metal lipstick cases and shell cartridge packaging with paper. And today, those same machines are currently being used to make bright pink boxes for Lush

Please See LUXURY, B5



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Greg Ward, Burt Rigid Box operations manager, stacks up some of the Town of Oneonta plant's products, including - in that black box, lower right - packaging for Jack Daniel's Sinatra Select, a special whiskey issued to mark Old Blue Eyes' centennial Saturday, Dec. 12.

Company Moved To Oneonta, Closer To Avon, Top Customer

LUXURY/From B1
Cosmetics.

The company moved to Oneonta in 1974, and in 1983, C. Taylor Kew and W. Russell Hurd bought the company. And while Hurd is still president, his daughter, Laura Brodie, serves as VP.

"At the time, Avon was our biggest customer, and they didn't like going all the way out to Buffalo to approve packaging," said Ward. "They were in New York City, so Oneonta was much closer."

The company employs 38 people year 'round, but hire up to 100 temps during the busiest months, May to October, when orders for Christmas packaging are processed. "We'll run eight to 10 boxes at a time," said Ward. "We must do 12 million boxes a year."

The newest machines on the production line, made by Emmeci in Providence, R.I., are cranking out Godiva boxes, wrapping the flat, die-cut chipboard with the familiar gold paper, lining it with purple paper and then folding the box into shape - 38 boxes per minute. "It's amazing to watch these machines come alive," Ward said.

Last year, Burt was contacted by Jack Daniels to make a box for their commemorative "Sinatra Select"

bottles in honor of Frank Sinatra's 100th birthday. "He always had a bottle of Jack Daniels with him," said Ward. "You can go to any liquor store right here in Oneonta and buy a bottle, and no one knows the box was made right here!"

The Sinatra box was like no other they'd done before. "There are a lot of components to this box," said Ward. "It's got the outside box, a die-cut tray, the back tray, as well as a ribbon and a metal medallion," he said. "It's fabric-wrapped, and these were assembled by hand. We made 364,000 of those."

And in May of this year, the local company became the first rigid-box manufacturer to be awarded AIB food safety certification in nonfood-contact packaging. The American Institute of Baking designation "certifies us to be able to work with food-grade products," said Ward. "We can't wrap cookies or anything like that, but we can make a box where the food is in a plastic tray and a barrier in between the box itself."

And they're not done inventing yet. "We're working on a way to make heart-shaped boxes for Valentine's Day candies," said Ward. "When a customer comes to us and asks, can we make it, we'll find a way to do it."

CHRISTMAS H

Thursday,
December 3

ONEONTA UGLY SWEATER CONTEST 10 a.m.-7 p.m. First annual Ugly Sweater Contest, hosted by McLaughlin's Clothing Store of Oneonta. Wear your sweater to the store; store certificates as prizes; winners announced at evening tree lighting event. 166 Main St., Oneonta.

ONEONTA TREE LIGHTING - 5-8 p.m. Annual Oneonta holiday ceremony. Santa; carriage rides, dancers, carolers, alpacas, hot cocoa, street vendors. Also 6-7:30 p.m. meet & greet with local representatives at Welcome Center on Dietz St. Muller Plaza, Main Street, Oneonta.

Friday,
December 4

HOLIDAY GREENS SALE - 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Oneonta Garden Club annual Greens Sale and Lunch. All welcome. Wreaths, fresh arrangements, garlands, baked goodies. Soup and sandwich lunch. Supports Oneonta beautification projects. St. James Episcopal Church, 300 Main St., Oneonta. Info, email lauriezimniewicz@gmail.com

GILBERTSVILLE HOLIDAY TOUR - 7-9 p.m., Gilbertsville Free Library hosts public tour of four historic village homes, plus churches and local businesses, all decorated for the holidays. Benefits the historic library. Also local artisan holiday sale at The Empire House & open house at Dunderberg Gallery. Tickets, tours start at the library, 19 Commercial St., Gilbertsville. Info, (607) 783-2731 or (607) 783-2832.

Saturday,
December 5

PTA BREAKFAST & MARKET-PLACE - 8 a.m.-noon. Annual all-you-can-eat-pancake breakfast and holiday marketplace, to benefit Cooperstown PTA. Cooperstown Elementary School,

Walnut St., Cooperstown.
THISTLE HILL OPEN HOUSE - 9 a.m.-5 p.m. (Also Dec. 6). Annual holiday open house showroom and mill tours for historic Thistle Hill Weavers textile mill. Mill is weaving drapery fabrics for Abraham Lincoln's home in Springfield, Ill. Mill also open weekdays starting Dec. 7. 101 Chestnut Ridge Rd, Cherry Valley. Info, www.thistlehillweavers.com

HALL OF FAME FETE - starting 9 a.m. Spread cheer while helping local families in need at the National Baseball Hall of Fame's annual Holiday Celebration. Free admission to all to bring a new, unwrapped toy, or at least two non-perishable food items. Family activities; 2 p.m. performance by Pathfinder Bell Choir. Baseball HOF, 25 Main St., Cooperstown. Info, www.baseballhall.org.

CRAFT FAIR - 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Holiday Craft Fair with hand-made items from area artisans. Free. Hunt Union Ballroom, Ravine Pkwy., SUNY Oneonta. Info, (607) 436-3591.

CHERRY VALLEY OPEN HOUSES - 10 a.m.-5 p.m. (Also Dec. 6). Annual holiday goodies, pop-up shops, door prizes, decorations,

more. S. Museum with govt at partic St., Cherry valley. **CHRISTMAS** - 10 a.m. 39th ok house, 1 Barn Pri gingerb goods, 1 ternut F www.bu

ART p.m. (al Open h holiday freshm through Art Gall Valley. 1

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A rapidly growing energy storage company ultracapacitors and ultracapacitor-base

This position is responsible for ad ations; performing accounting fu counts receivable, account analysi: nal entries; ensuring compliance projects and data entry. Must ha familiar with standard acc

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CA
Send cover letter and resume to loxi Circle, Oneont