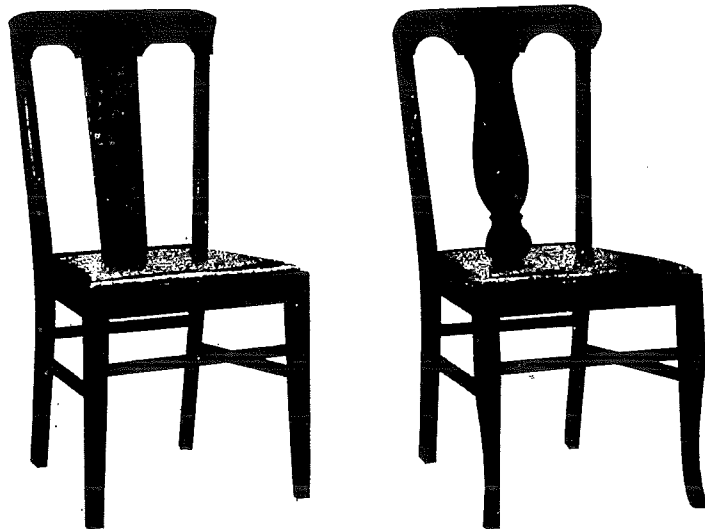


*2 Handsome, Well-Built Diners*



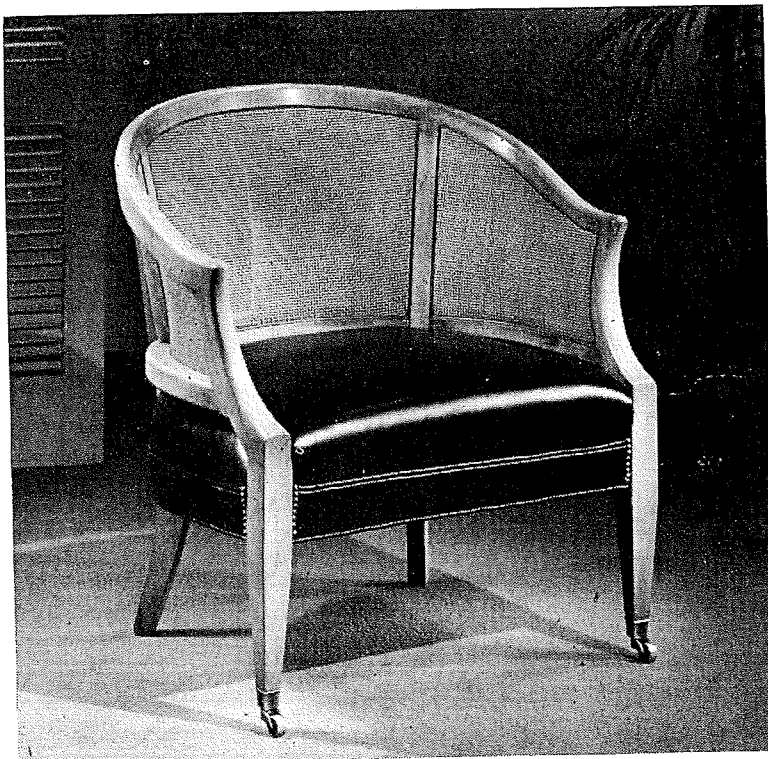
**\$3.15** No. 1A Quartered Oak Diner finished in golden oak gloss. Slip seat, 18" wide, height of back, 20". Steam bent back and back posts. Equipped with slides. Built with our corner block construction. A good looking and durable diner. In genuine leather, \$3.35. In assorted tapestries and velours, \$3.15.

**\$3.30** No. 9A Diner, same as No. 1A except for shaped legs and center splat. Leather, \$3.50. Assorted tapestries and velours, \$3.30.

The Charlotte Chair Company was founded in 1912 by a group of Grand Ledge men, who, a few years later, sold out to the Spaulding and Elles interests. Mr. E. J. Elles headed the company for many years as President and Mr. Reuben S. Smith served as Secretary and Treasurer. The present officers are Edward S. Elles, President; Frank D. Elles, Vice-President; and Reuben S. Smith, Secretary and Treasurer.

1912

The only thing constant is change. Fifty-one years of Chair-making in Charlotte has been our good fortune. The Charlotte Chair Company has earned the reputation as a fine chair supplier to the better furniture stores and interior decorators throughout the country. Our institutional seating division has furnished the best hotels, restaurants and clubs in the fifty states and Canada.



1963

*Charlotte Chair Co.*

A Reflection of Fine Taste Since 1912  
Charlotte, Michigan

## Charlotte Chair Company/ James Brandt Company

Charlotte Chair Company was started by E. J. Elles and Frank Spalding in 1912. Soon after that, before 1920, E. J. Elles became the sole owner. Their plant was located on North Cochran where the James Brandt Company is now. The plant was enlarged to its present size, about 34,000 square feet, in 1921. They had 30 employees. The company's only product then was dining room chairs. They had a special patented locking method for securing the seat and arms to the back. This made for an exceptionally strong chair. It was merchandised with tables and other dining room furniture from other manufacturers.

In 1930, the chair company acquired the old Dolson/Duplex Truck Factory on Pearl Street. Work was split between the two plants with machining, wood finishing, and assembly in the North Cochran plant and upholstery, warehousing, and shipping at Pearl Street. The wood being used then was oak.

Edward (Bun) Elles joined the company in 1935 and in the years to come became the general manager and sole owner. The employee force topped at 115 people.

Production during the war years of '41 to '45 was difficult because production machine parts and repair was almost impossible to get. The company secured a couple of war contracts which helped. They built all-wooden (runners and all) dog sleds in preparation for an invasion the military never had to make. They also built sub assemblies for aircraft-towed gliders used in the invasion of Europe.

After the war the Chair Company went to occasional chairs and about this time began to secure contracts for commercial chairs for restaurants and office use. The designer for the interior of the Chicago Civic Center specified that their chairs be made of English brown oak - expensive, Bun discovered too late!

In 1956 the company built reproduction chairs for the restoration of the old State House in Springfield, Illinois. This contract called for horsehair cloth upholstery! They found a company in England to provide it - a modern day miracle. This exposure lead to the manufacture of many styles of antique reproductions for such retailers as Macy's Department Store.

In 1969, the Charlotte Chair company was sold to a conglomerate, The Illinois Iron and Bolt Company. The Pearl Street plant was sold to Frank Palmer, the owner of Charlotte Wood Products in 1970. The North Cochran Plant was acquired by James Brandt in February, 1988. The James Brandt Co. make college dormitory furniture including beds, end tables, night stands, desks, and, of course, chairs. The company now employs 44 people.

## General Aluminum, Inc./Carefree

The story of the conception, growth, and maturity of this company in our generation is a spine-tingling example of what can happen when a goal is set and a course is determined, and the will to follow that course is unflagging.

General Aluminum, Inc., which is today known better by its product name, **Carefree**, was organized in 1955 by three men from Charlotte. Dick Trumley was in charge of

manufacturing and sales. Max King was the financial and accounting department. Art Vomberg was the company mentor. Each of the three principals paid in \$5,000 to create the initial capital. No additional capital has ever been added by any stock holder.

Their first plant was little more than an oversized garage of about 4,000 square feet on a back street in Eaton Rapids. The year was 1955 and the housing industry was booming. Aluminum storm window sales go hand-in-glove with home building. Dick Trumley "knew the territory," but for a new company to make its mark takes time and effort. Dick traveled every week, setting up dealers and distributors, while the four employees in the shop produced the windows that he sold the week before.

Frequently he would spend Friday afternoon canvassing for retail window sales which he and Max King would buy from the company and would install themselves on the weekend to provide funds to pay their family creditors. None of the principals took any wages from the company until it could safely afford to pay.

In four years, the company was well on its way to financial stability. The corporation bought out the interest of Max King.

Art Vomberg was very important to the company as advisor, and much of his advice was incorporated in establishing the rules by which the company learned to play - the rules which made it successful then and keep it so today. A popular misconception regarding Art Vomberg's roll was that it was primarily financial. This, in fact, was not so. His good advice helped to make the company successful in its own right so the finances took care of themselves. At the time of Art's death in 1969, all of his estate went into a fund established in 1962, now well known as the Vomberg Foundation. The Foundation currently provides college tuition grants for 185 students. It has helped to make a college education possible for thousands of students in the past 27 years..

In the spring of 1959, in a purely chance conversation over lunch, Dick mentioned to a friend from Charlotte that he was about to build a new plant in Eaton Rapids. That same afternoon there was a meeting in the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce Office of Bob Gibson with several local business men framing an offer to Dick that he couldn't refuse. On the front page of the September 27, 1959, issue of **The Republican Tribune** is a picture of Dick Trumley, Art Vomberg, Bob Gibson, and others breaking ground for a new \$100,000, 18,000 square feet factory located on eight acres in Charlotte's new Reynolds Road Industrial Park.

By then, General Aluminum was making storm doors as well as storm windows, and its employment was 50 people. In 1959, the Carefree Storm Door was selected by the National Association of Home Builders to be the best such door being produced in the United States.

Aluminum siding was added to their product line in the early 60s and a major contract for siding for buildings being built at Kincheloe Air Force Base at Sault Ste. Marie. This was a critical point in the company's career. A mistake here could have been fatal and nearly was.

TALES ALONG Clinton Trail

Published by the Eaton County Historical Society 1989

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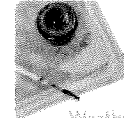
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Home > Ask The Community

## Ask The Community



### charlotte chair company

#### Question from harmus

#### Item's Description

I have 6 chairs made by this company, one is a chaptain's chair. There is also a table that I am not able to find markings on. (I don't really know where to look for markings) The table has 3 leaves with a unique locking system. The chairs have several numbers on them and I am not sure what they mean. I would like to know if the chairs and the table maybe worth restoring. Here are the numbers from one of the chairs At the top of the tag is 10902, under that is Charlotte Chair Company, Charlotte MI. Under the name is No. 2264-1 mahog. then Cover No. 3707 Grade BB.

#### Answer by fmtaylor

**On the March 12th,2008**

The Charlotte Chair Co was founded in 1912 and made upholstered antique reproduction seating. Today the company is known simply as the Charlotte Co. If you can post some photos I will try to identify the chairs for you. Here's how to post - 1. After you have typed your question and clicked , click on your question title link. 2. There should be 5 tabs below your question title marked, View, Edit, Image, Track, and Votes. Click the  tab. 3. Click the  button. This will take you to your desktop. Locate the image you want to post and select . 4. Click the  button on the WorthPoint screen. Your image should now appear with your question. To add more images, repeat these steps. Fred Taylor Worthologist  
ww.furnituredetective.com

**Answer by harmus**

**On the March 17th,2008**

I have added some pictures of the chairs. I tried to get a picture of the tag that is under all the chairs, but none of the photos came out clearly.

**Answer by fmtaylor**

**On the March 24th,2008**

Your chairs are Colonial Revival reproductions of chairs made during the Federal period of the early 19th century. The material is also very representative of that period. The chairs were probably made in the early 1950s. Charlotte made good quality reproductions and the chairs are probably worth the cost of restoration. I can't comment on the table because I haven't seen it. Fred TAYlor Worthologist www.furnituredetetcive.com

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