

# Perfect Triumph: Oneida Community's Resilient Son

## The Life of Albert E. "Bob" Kinsley

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Although not as well recognized as Sewell Newhouse, Albert E. "Bob" Kinsley greatly impacted trap production of the early 1900s. He was born into the Oneida Community (OC) and was able to learn the trap manufacturing and sales business from the best. He was instrumental in assisting with the creation of two trap manufacturing components and was awarded several trap improvement patents after leaving Oneida Community Limited (OCL). Bob Kinsley was greatly influenced by persons both inside and outside OCL and these individuals would mentor him in aggressive business techniques or provide financial backing to fuel his drive to survive outside the Community.

The Oneida Community was a religious commune which followed the teachings of John Humphrey Noyes which he called perfectionism. Part of this religious belief was that marriage was selfish as it allowed two people to have exclusive rights to each other. Members were encouraged to have multiple sexual partners within the community and love everyone in the Community equally. This was called Complex Marriage.

Albert Kinsley, grandfather of Bob Kinsley, came to the OC and joined the group of "Perfectionists" in 1848. Albert Kinsley brought four children into the Community including Martin, who was Bob Kinsley's father, and Myron, who turned out to be one of JH Noyes' loyal supporters, and two daughters.

### James W. Towner and Stripiculture

James W. Towner joined the OC in 1874. Towner and William A. Hinds, who had been with the Community since its founding, questioned JH Noyes's authority to decide who was to introduce young Community women to Complex Marriage. JH Noyes had always assumed this responsibility. Towner attacked JH Noyes's leadership because it was looked upon as a dictatorship, and Towner's campaign was aimed to force JH Noyes to share leadership. Both of Bob Kinsley's parents followed Towner as they did not agree with JH Noyes's leadership. This group was called the "Townerites".

Stripicultural or eugenics was practiced from 1869 to 1879 producing 58 of the 98 live children born in the Community. Couples were selected by JH Noyes to conceive children. The children were raised communally. From 1875 to 1878, a twelve-member stripicultural committee selected parents based on both their physical and spiritual qualities. Because of pressure from Towner, this committee was created to share the decision of pair selecting and was the group that paired Bob Kinsley's parents together.

Bob Kinsley was born on September 17, 1877. He was the 92<sup>nd</sup> child born in the Community and the 50<sup>th</sup> stripicultural child. He was the second of five children of Martin Kinsley and Alice Ackley, who were married at the breakup of the OC.

Complex Marriage ended in August of 1879. On January 1, 1881, communism of property ended and the OC was legally changed to OCL. This was a very challenging time for adults in the OC let alone a child trying to understand what was happening. In the beginning of Bob Kinsley's life, he was cared for in the communal ways of the OC. At the breakup, his family still lived on the OC property but they were together as traditional families were. After this, Bob Kinsley's family lived on both the Clark and Hubbard farms off of OC property before returning to live in the Mansion House once again.

### Pierrepont B. Noyes

On June 26, 1894, Pierrepont B. Noyes, son of JH Noyes, married Corinna Ackley Kinsley, the older half sister of Bob Kinsley, at the Mansion House Hall. PB Noyes would be the biggest influence on Bob Kinsley and his life choices.

In 1895, Pierrepont B Noyes was appointed as Superintendent of the Company's Niagara Falls factories. One of the first items PB Noyes did was to remove the Canadian salesman because he was making business deals which were detrimental to OCL. This same person initiated the construction of a brand-new factory in Canada to manufacture traps and directly compete with OCL. Once PB Noyes found out about this, he immediately started construction on a factory in Canada. The OCL factory was completed and the first traps were produced before the other factory was completed. Because of this, the competitor turned their attention to other lines of manufacture.

The changes that PB Noyes made in Canada gave Bob Kinsley his first opportunity to work as a salesman for OCL. In 1896 while still in his teens, Bob Kinsley started as a trap salesman. Besides game traps, he also sold mouse traps, silk, thread, canned goods and silverware. In 1902, Bob Kinsley was added to the New York City Sales staff and remained a salesman for OCL through the beginning of 1913.

In 1897, the trap factory in Oneida was losing sales. PB Noyes was named to a committee of three to oversee the trap operations. In 1899, the company announced its largest profits to date. PB Noyes was appointed to general manager over all the Company's divisions including traps.

PB Noyes foresaw that traps could not continue to be Oneida's economic mainstay and proposed that silverware take its place. In 1904, PB Noyes used \$30,000 of trap business profits to increase the silverplate advertising from \$5,000 from the year before. From 1903 to 1910, trap sales allowed OCL to persist in continually advertising on a scale sufficient to establish their silverware as a nationally known product. This may have been a major contributor to the reason that Bob Kinsley left the OCL. He saw the future for trap manufacturing at OCL coming to an end.

Bob Kinsley would see first hand PB Noyes's tactics for dealing with threats to the OCL's trap sales. Harding was producing the Hunter Trader Trapper and PB Noyes was concerned about the frequent reference to the brands of traps the writers preferred. PB Noyes was concerned that Harding and Frank W. Schultz, a very aggressive manufacturer of mouse traps, would form an alliance. PB Noyes tried to buy a half-interest in the magazine, but Harding would not discuss a sale. Because of this, PB Noyes started a competitive magazine called the North American Trapper. Harding, being fearful of the competition, sold PB Noyes a half-interest in the magazine and the North American Trapper was abandoned.

Schultz had merged three mouse trap companies and was in the process of building a new factory in Lititz, Pennsylvania. Schultz had already offered the traps at 10 percent lower than OCL prices. In March of 1906 in a foot of snow, PB Noyes and Bob Kinsley paid a visit to Lititz Pennsylvania. They visited Schultz's half finished factory and noticed a vacant lot adjacent to his factory. By noon of that day, PB Noyes held the option on the land adjoining the factory. PB Noyes used the land purchase as leverage in negotiating the sale of the Animal Trap Company to OCL and another competitor was removed. The Animal Trap Company name was dropped, but mouse trap manufacturing continued in Lititz as part of OCL.

### Community Boy

Bob Kinsley would harness the fear of being a "Community boy", just as PB Noyes had done, to foster a drive to survive outside of the Community. After the breakup, the hired men, who had been once required to keep their distance socially, now observed, "You Community boys will never be able to make your own way in the world; you will always have to stay by the Big House" referring to the Mansion House. PB Noyes first talks of having a fear of social ostracism which was then replaced with having an inferiority complex. PB Noyes felt a realism that Community folks were ill equipped to compete as individuals in the world's economic struggle. He often heard that "We were all better off to stay with the company." While carrying lumber with a couple of hired carpenters, one stated that "You ought not to have to do such heavy work at your age." The other carpenter cynically broke in "He'll have a soft enough job in the end. He's a Community boy."

### Oneida Game Trap Company

Because of the path OCL was taking with its future in trap manufacturing, disappointment from lack of appreciation from OCL and an internal drive to not be a "Community boy", Bob Kinsley parted ways with OCL to be involved in the creation of the Oneida Game Trap Company.

In March of 1913, the Oneida Game Trap Company was being organized. At the request of Henry A. Constantine, Bob Kinsley purchased samples of various traps on the market at the time and sent them to Constantine in Niagara Falls. The Oneida Game Trap Company was incorporated on March 25, 1913.

In April of 1913, Albert E. Bob Kinsley was hired as Sale Manager. As part of his responsibilities in the beginning of May of 1913, he made a selling trip with stops in Cleveland, Detroit, Indianapolis, Louisville, Chicago, Duluth, Minneapolis, Kansas City, St. Louis and New Orleans. One of the companies contacted during this trip was Hibbard, Spencer and Bartlett of Chicago. This was a very important contact as they would later sell Triumph traps with the REV-O-NOC stamp. During the trip, he took orders for Number 0, 1, 1 ½ and 2 size traps. Kinsley was back by June of 1913. He also made another selling trip to Baltimore in 1913.

During this trip, Kinsley had only one trap with him. It was a composite trap that was the only one of its kind. The pan was made from a dish pan, jaws were from a Sargent trap and the cross arm and pan post were made by hand.

The Oneida Game Trap Company changed its name to the Triumph Trap Company on September 14, 1915 due to losing a lawsuit to OCL over the use of the word "Oneida". Bob Kinsley left the Triumph Trap Company in 1922 as he was not happy with the operations. Bob Kinsley wanted to increase sales while Triumph wanted to increase the quality of the traps.

### Norwich Wire Works (Diamond Traps)

In 1922, Bob Kinsley went to work for the Norwich Wire Works and assisted with the creation of the Diamond Trap Brand. In 1924, Claude E. Marble, Robert Bolles and Felix Woolworth purchased the mouse and rat trap department from OCL and named it the Animal Trap Company (ATC). In 1925, ATC purchased OCL's entire trap manufacturing business. The Diamond Trap Brand was purchased by the ATC on March 30, 1931. Bob Kinsley worked for ATC as a trap salesman after the sale.

### Patents

Bob Kinsley had several trap patents in which he is the documented inventor. On November 13, 1917, he was awarded the patent for Improvements in Collapsible Animal Traps. This patent was assigned to the Oneida Game Trap Company as the patent was filed in 1913. On August 28, 1917, Bob Kinsley was awarded a patent for the bend that is found on Triumph trap springs. This patent was assigned to the Triumph Trap Company. This bend patent led to a lawsuit against OCL for their Giant trap brand. Triumph won this court battle.

While Bob Kinsley worked for Norwich Wire Works, Lester A. Beardsley was awarded four patents for trap improvements. Although Bob Kinsley was the main inventor of the trap improvements, Beardsley put them in his name since Bob Kinsley had already left two trap companies. Beardsley was awarded patents for trap improvements on June 5, 1928; July 16, 1929 and September 17, 1929. These three patents show the Triumph pinched cross in their respective diagram. Beardsley was also awarded a patent on May 18, 1926 for a process of producing trap jaws. On September 1, 1931, Bob Kinsley was awarded a patent for trap improvements which were on the Diamond Walloper. Ironically, the Diamond Trap Brand had already been purchased by ATC five months before the patent was issued.

On October 17, 1933, Bob Kinsley and Donald, his son, were awarded a patent for improvements to mouse traps. On September 4, 1934, Bob Kinsley received his last trap patent.

### Life Outside the Trap Business

In 1900, Bob Kinsley married Martha Pardon and had three children – Reginald, Donald and Ruth. After leaving the trap sales business, Bob Kinsley and Donald operated an Oil Company and sold oil burners in Oneida. In 1940, Bob Kinsley retired to a life of gardening due to illness. Bob Kinsley died on August 10, 1944 at the age of 66 after a long battle with cancer of the urinary bladder. He is buried in the Glenwood Cemetery in Oneida.

### Influences

Bob Kinsley's entire life revolved around trap manufacturing and sales. He had five main influences which shaped his life. The first was Towner's affect on stirpicultural which paired his parents together and brought Bob Kinsley into existence. The second was the breakup of the OC. Bob Kinsley's youth was chaotic and highly fluid as his family changed living arrangements four times while he was very young. His parents showed him how to be highly adaptable and embrace change which would serve him well later in life. The third and greatest influence to Bob Kinsley's life was the courtship and resulting marriage of Pierrepont B Noyes to his half sister, Corrina. This introduced Bob Kinsley to the person who gave him his first job as a trap salesman. Bob Kinsley learned cut-throat and aggressive business practices from PB Noyes and utilized what he learned while assisting with the creation of the Oneida Game Trap Company and the Diamond Trap Brand. The fourth was Henry A. Constantine's financial backing during the creation of the Oneida Game Trap Company. The last was Lester A. Beardsley's financial backing through the Norwich Wire Works and the creation of the Diamond Trap Brand.

In the end, Bob Kinsley had been a salesman for four different trap manufacturing companies. Although looked upon negatively for changing companies frequently, it showed his internal drive to triumph over the outside world's perception of the OC and not be a "Community boy".

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