

Caldwell/Moser Leather Company

Founded: 1878

Location: 272–278 East Eighth Street, New Albany (1878–1914); 802–814 East Eighth Street (same as previous address); Silver Street, south of Pennsylvania Railroad; 232 Silver Street (1914–)

George Moser immigrated to the United States from Germany as a teenager in the late 1860s. He settled in New Albany, where his elder brother ran a tailoring business, and learned the tanner's trade under August Barth, who had established Barth's Tannery on East Tenth Street in 1864. After ten years with Barth, Moser purchased the Lockwood Brothers tannery at 272–278 East Eighth Street in 1878. He enlarged and improved it and went into business for himself. In July 1891 Moser brought his nephew John M. Moser into the firm as a partner and changed the name of the tannery to George Moser & Company. By 1892 the company employed thirty to thirty-five men, sold its products to jobbers across the country, and was handling about 15,000 medium-weight hides per year.

Moser specialized in high-grade leather for harness and collar makers; the company marketed its product as Hemlock Collar Leather. In 1900 Charles E. Moser assumed his brother John's interest in George Moser & Company. In 1905 George opened an additional leather plant, which he named the Indiana Leather Company, on Silver Street, south of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Fire destroyed the East Eighth Street tannery in 1914. George died the same year, and his heirs renamed the remaining Indiana Leather Company the George Moser Leather Company. Eventually George Moser's sons George Jr., Julius, and Karl joined the company, but it was George's partner (and nephew), Charles Moser, who assumed the presidency.

By 1936 the George Moser Leather Company covered nearly eight acres and employed approximately one hundred workers. The company was a wholesale leather manufacturer, tanning hides purchased by the carload and converting them into leather for shoes, belts, or saddles. In the 1980s the company became the Caldwell/Moser Leather Company.

In the 1990s the company continued to tan leather in an old-fashioned manner, with a four-week treatment in a solution of water and tree bark from South America. While the traditional way costs more, the leather lasts longer, and the process does not harm the environment as does the chromium-salt process used by most tanneries. In 1998 the company employed seventy and forecast sales of \$12 million. Jim Head held the position of general manager. Leather from the tannery was used in Klein tools, G. H. Bass shoes, and Harley-Davidson motorcycle saddlebags.