

Frederick Sheet Metal, Incorporated

Founded: ca. 1880

Location: 610 Main Street, Tell City (1883–1913); 611 Main Street (1913–32); 608 Seventh Street (1932–66); 614 Seventh Street (1966–)

At the age of five, John V. Ress was one of the first settlers to reach the Swiss-German planned village of Tell City in Perry County. His parents, John and Anne Schmidberger Ress, had emigrated from Germany with a large number of others in 1848, settling in Cincinnati until joining a private society that eventually chose Indiana for its ideal town's site. As an adult, Ress continued living in Tell City and may have started a tinner's business as early as 1878 at his home. When he moved his operation to Main Street in the early 1880s, he added hardware to his line of products. By the late 1890s coal and kerosene stoves and hand-operated washing machines adorned the walk outside the store, which Ress had named the Tell City Stove and Tin Store. Ress and his family lived above the two-story red-brick store.

In 1913 the hardware business needed more room to grow, and Ress moved it across the street. He relocated the tin shop down the alley from the new store. The name of the firm changed to John V. Ress & Sons to reflect the fact that John and Elizabeth Hirschbruner Ress's two sons, John and Frederick C., had joined their father in the business. John Jr. was placed in charge of the hardware store, and Frederick oversaw the operations of the tin shop. After their father died in 1916, the two brothers renamed the company J. V. Ress Sons; the partnership continued until the Great Depression. In 1932 the brothers divided the business between them, with Frederick taking the tin shop operations. At that time Frederick changed the name of his firm to Frederick Sheet Metal.

The shop did not take up all of Frederick's time, however. He also sat on the boards of several companies around town, including the Citizens National Bank.

Frederick and his wife, Nettie Muelchi Ress, raised five sons, but only the oldest child, Robert E., followed his father into the metal fabrication business. Robert soon had children of his own, and his oldest son, Marion, chose to embrace his great-grandfather's trade. After spending three years in the United States Marine Corps, Marion rejoined the firm. After Frederick died in 1962, Robert and his son presided over the business until purchasing it outright from Nettie in January 1966. By June of the same year the building at 608 Seventh Street had been bought by Tell City National Bank, and the father and son erected a new facility at 614 Seventh Street.

Robert and Marion Ress formed a corporation in the mid-1960s, and Robert served as its first president while his wife Betty became the vice president. By January 1974 Robert was in poor health. He sold the company to Marion, who then became president. Marion made his eldest son, Mark L., the vice president, and Dorothy Ress, Marion's wife, took the post of secretary-treasurer. In the 1990s Mark and his younger brother Edward M. assumed the senior posts in the corporation.

In 1999 Mark Ress was the president of Frederick Sheet Metal, Incorporated. The firm employed nine and specialized in fabricating sheet metal, ducts, and fittings and installing and servicing heating and cooling equipment.