

Kaiser's Tobacco Company, Incorporated

Founded: 1832

Location: First Street, between Market and Spring Streets, New Albany (1832); 111–112 Pearl Street (1868, 1882); 118 Pearl Street (1890); 326 Pearl Street (1903, 1904–)

David Gorlitz opened a cigar-making operation in 1832 on what is now Pearl Street in New Albany. Josephine Keifer, Gorlitz's stepdaughter, married Louis Kaiser. Because Gorlitz had no sons to whom he could pass on the family business, Louis Kaiser became the owner of the store after 1865. Josephine ran the business after Louis's death. Her son, also named Louis, took over the company in 1874.

Upon Louis's death in 1924 his wife, Elizabeth, assumed ownership of the business, later sharing it with her sons, Robert N., Louis C. III, and William H. Kaiser. Elizabeth remained the manager of the store until her death in 1954, at which time William became the proprietor.

In 1957 William H. Kaiser incorporated the business and reshaped the enterprise to meet the growing wholesale supply demand. His sons took an active role in the operations. John R. became president; Louis A., vice president; George E., treasurer; and William J., secretary. By 1965 father and sons ran two stores and a wholesale warehouse, located on Oak Street. The company not only sold tobacco but also provided vending machines with candy and paper products. William H. died in 1975, passing the business on to his four sons.

By the early 1990s the brothers had added new items to the tobacco store inventory. Bulk candy, pocket knives, and lottery tickets joined tobacco products as the store's main sales items. The company retained its ties to tobacco, however. It stocked

more than three thousand different pipes (with prices ranging from around \$2.00 for a corncob pipe to more than \$100 for a meerschaum briar model), cigarettes, and handmade premium cigars. John R. Kaiser retained the title of president in 1998.