

Tell City Pretzel Company

Founded: 1858

Location: Original site at Main and Blum Streets, Tell City (1858); 200 Main Street (1902); 848 Ninth Street (1954, 1976); 632-B Main Street (1997)

Casper Gloor, a master baker from Switzerland, founded the Gloor Bakery in Tell City in 1858. As a member of the Swiss Colonization Society, organized in Cincinnati, he believed in the group's vision of creating an economically balanced society. He moved to Tell City in advance of the bulk of settlers from the society in March 1858. By June, Tell City had grown to 1,230 citizens. Gloor was active in social and community organizations, serving as an officer in a local lodge. Gloor's bakery provided patrons with pastries and breads and made pretzels only as a side item. In 1895 Gloor hired Alex Kessler as an apprentice. Gloor ran the bakery until his death in 1912.

Kessler took over the bakery, renaming it Kessler's Pretzel Company, and began to produce pretzels exclusively. He moved the bakery six blocks to 848 Ninth Street. Kessler, like Gloor, was heavily involved in community programs, organizing a band in the 1920s and participating in a local lodge. When Alex Kessler died, his son Russell took over the business.

Russell bought new machinery in the 1960s, hoping to reduce costs and make the company more efficient. Instead of better profits, however, the move sent the company into insolvency, forcing Kessler to sell the venture. Interestingly, Kessler remained an employee of the business until retiring in 1975.

The early 1970s brought instability to the small company. Ownership changed hands several times. Petroleum King, Incorporated, which had bought the pretzel-maker company from Kessler, sold the firm to Tell City Woodcrafters. That group sold the business to James

Hollinden, who owned it for less than a year before turning it over to Jim Elder in 1972. Elder, a former Tell City National Bank employee, presided over the company for a decade, bringing some stability and profitability back to the organization. Philip Jamison purchased the pretzel company next but sold it six years later, citing his inability to expand the company's market as a cause for his departure. In 1998 the owners were Joe Sims, Craig Kendall, and Danny Laib; the partners had operated the business since 1989. Tell City pretzels were shipped all over the world, including to Japan and Germany. The company employed six and expected sales of between \$1 million and \$4.9 million.

When the company announced its closure in 2001, it was purchased by Brett Mulzer and Ryan Werner; they moved the operation to a nearby vacant building, from where it still operates.