



Brad Smith, co-owner of Tell City Pretzel Co., worked between Peggy Cardin, left, and Jessica Lively during a day of twisting, salting and baking in October. Brad and his wife, Sandy, recently took over the pretzel company with a 150-year history.

A New Twist On An Old Pretzel

Story by **Hak Haskins**
Photos by **Justin Rumbach**

Brad and Sandy Smith didn't know a thing about making pretzels on July 3, the day they closed the deal and picked up the keys to the building that housed the defunct Tell City Pretzel Co.

Simply put, the Jasper couple saw a business opportunity.

When the word hit Tell City streets that the Tell City Pretzel Co. was back in business after a 16-month hiatus, the small bakery on Washington Street became a mecca for pretzel lovers past to pay homage to those who refired the ovens.

Brad shook hands with grateful customers, accepted congratulations, listened to pretzel stories, then shook some more hands; there was little time for much else.

And while he balanced books, learned to use the equipment, rehired a few former employees

■ THE TELL CITY PRETZEL CO. CLOSED 150 YEARS AFTER IT OPENED. AND REOPENED IN JULY OF THIS YEAR. THE NEW OWNERS, JASPER RESIDENTS BRAD AND SANDY SMITH, WANT TO TAKE THE VENERABLE PRETZEL TO NEW FLAVORS AND MARKETS.

and found distributors to deliver the pretzels, he realized something:

"People take these pretzels personally."

I was a long personal relationship. The company traces its roots to Casper Gloor, a master baker from Switzerland and a member of the Swiss Colonization Society, who arrived in Perry County in 1858, according to the company's Web site.

Gloor brought two things for pretzel making: a recipe and a process. When he died in 1912 he

passed the recipe to a former employee, who later passed it to his sons.

That recipe remained in use through the spring of 2008 when the recession crept into the Midwest and the Tell City Pretzel Co. found itself in a twist. It closed in 2008, 150 years after it opened.

Shortly after, Brad and Sandy began looking into buying it.

"I knew there was a market because it had been there before," Brad says. "I tried to figure out the costs and I knew how much they sold pretzels for and how many I'd have to sell. I knew it was doable. It seemed silly not to try it."

Brad works at the pretzel company full time. Sandy remains in her full-time job as Kimball International's director of information technology.

The August reopening launched a pretzel rush. Sandy recalls a couple from out of town who attended the Tell City Schweizer Fest, which coincided with the bakery's rebirth.

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