

Boetticher & Kellogg Company

Founded: 1863

Location: 13 First Street, Evansville (1863–); 22 North First Street; 122 Upper First Street (later 102–124 South First Street); 1–13 North Fulton Avenue (originally 1–13 North Water Street) (1920–); 1 Fulton Avenue (1993)

In 1863 Edward Boetticher and Charles H. Kellogg were working together in Evansville. Boetticher, the son of a German Protestant minister, apprenticed in his teens at Tyler, Davidson & Company, a Cincinnati hardware store. In 1857 he moved to Evansville and began working in the hardware firm of Charles S. Wells. Charles Kellogg's father, Henry S. Kellogg, was in the hardware business in Cincinnati before moving to Indiana and eventually settling in Indianapolis. Kellogg was briefly a partner in his father's business but sold his interest in 1858 and moved to Evansville. He also went to work for Wells, becoming a bookkeeper.

Wholesaling was a major industry in Evansville in the mid-nineteenth century, as merchants shipped goods from the river port into the interior of the state. Wells's firm was positioned to capitalize on this. When Charles Wells died in 1863 Boetticher and Kellogg purchased his business in partnership with Charles's brother, Hiram K. Wells. The resulting firm of Wells, Kellogg & Company, importers and wholesalers in hardware, cutlery, and notions, was located at 13 North First Street. In 1867 Boetticher and Kellogg bought out Hiram, and the firm became Boetticher, Kellogg & Company.

Although Boetticher, Kellogg & Company was primarily a hardware wholesaler (becoming, by 1905, the third largest in the state), the firm sold a wide variety of goods, including cutlery, firearms, rubber belting, and Buffalo Scales. In 1897 Boetticher, Kellogg & Company incorporated with a capital stock of \$100,000, becoming Boetticher

& Kellogg Company, Incorporated. All of the stock was held by the Boetticher and Kellogg families. Edward Boetticher became a prominent Evansville citizen and was elected to the city council. He assumed the presidency of the newly incorporated company, and his three surviving sons rose to management positions. When Charles Kellogg died in 1903, his son succeeded him as secretary and treasurer.

Boetticher & Kellogg Company continued to grow in the twentieth century and was commonly referred to as Bee-Kay. William H. Boetticher became president, when his father died in 1912. In 1920 the business moved from First Street to 1–13 North Fulton Avenue. The company built a four-story warehouse with 80,000 square feet of office and storage space. Gradually Boetticher & Kellogg Company passed out of the possession of the Boettichers and Kelloggs. In 1947 John F. Kirwer, the son of a cotton loom repairman who had begun working at the company when he was seventeen, became president. By the 1950s the company had two warehouses and eighteen traveling salesmen, employed more than one hundred people, and distributed goods over a territory with a radius of a hundred miles. It distributed its own line of “Bee-Kay” products. By the 1980s Boetticher & Kellogg Company employed seventy-five workers and distributed a wide range of products, numbering 24,000 separate items, including hardware, building materials, sporting goods, furnaces, radios, paints, automobile accessories, and household, plumbing, and electrical supplies.