

William Entenmann



While it was his son who began to give the products fame and a daughter-in-law and grandsons who built Entenmann's, Inc. into one of the nation's largest sweet goods baking companies, it was William Entenmann who

established the business in New York that has become an enduring name in baking.

A native of Winnenden, Germany, near Stuttgart, Mr. Entenmann entered the business selling baked goods (together with coffee and wine) at his father's small store in his native country.

Ambition brought him to the United States, and in 1898, Mr. Entenmann opened a bakery in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn.

Sold under the Entenmann's brand, the company's bread, rolls, and cakes grew in popularity, delivered door-to-door in a horse-drawn buggy. The brand's reputation spread to other parts of Brooklyn and into Manhattan.

Just after the turn of the century, Mr. Entenmann's son, William Jr., contracted rheumatic fever, and the family moved to the country on doctor's advice. Settling on Long Island, a bakery was established in the town of Babylon on the Atlantic coast halfway across the island.

William Jr. took over the shop on Main Street and routes in the 1920s and moved into the family home. It was at the shop that he met his future wife, Martha, who was a pastry sales clerk.

Their three sons would later lead the business, but they began

at the company by cleaning ovens and decorating cakes.

The business expanded in the 1920s, and growing demand for the company's pastries and decorated cakes allowed the business to survive the Depression. The company's clientele included some of the most prestigious names on Long Island, including the Morgans and the Vanderbilts. The families had weekend estates on the Gold Coast of Long Island.

By the 1950s, celebrity custom-



Mr. Entenmann's daughter-in-law, Martha, was credited with the development in 1959 of a see-through film on Entenmann's packages.

ers included Frank Sinatra, who would place weekly phone orders to the Bay Shore bakery (a few miles to the east of Babylon) for the company's crumb coffee cake.

When Mr. Entenmann died of a heart attack in 1951, his widow, Martha, and three sons, William, Charles and Robert, made changes that helped set in motion rapid growth over the next three decades.

Seeking to tap into the growth in baked goods sales at supermarkets and facing a shift away from retail bakeries, the family phased out its bread business and delivery routes. Instead, the company focused on the baking and wholesale distribution of pastries and cakes to the growing number of supermarket chains serving New York City and its suburbs.

Martha Entenmann was credited with encouraging the development in 1959 of a see-through film on

Entenmann's packages, so customers could see the finished product.

The company's first significant expansion away from the Northeast took place in the 1970s, when the company began operating in Miami, following New Yorkers who moved to Florida.

Riding a wave of profitable sales growth, Entenmann's became a publicly traded company following

an initial public offering in 1976. By that time, the company was producing about 125 varieties of fresh baked goods. The company's best selling product, its frosted chocolate dipped donut, was introduced in 1972.

Having incorporated in 1958, the company was headed by Robert, Charles and William, as chairman of the board and chief executive officer, president and chief operating officer and executive vice-president, respectively. Martha was a vice-president of the company.

The Entenmann family retained

79% of the business following the i.p.o., but from the time the company went public, it was strongly hinted that further changes were needed. The company consistently made known its ambitions to expand geographically and that ways to accomplish this were being explored.

To conserve cash, the brothers waived the right to receive cash dividends for several years and a secondary stock offering was considered to finance the expansion.

In a 1977 financial report, the company said it had retained a market research company to assist in evaluating the major markets in the Midwest, Far West and Southwest.

Rather than expanding as an independent company, the business was acquired in 1978 by Warner-Lambert Co., one of the nation's largest pharmaceutical and consumer products companies, in a transaction worth \$230 million. At the time of the transaction, Entenmann's had annual sales of \$142 million and net income of \$11.2 million.

The acquisition proved to be effective to help the company expand. A year later, Entenmann's established baking and distribution operations in Chicago, expanding its reach through the Midwest. The brand came to the West coast in 1984.

Since the acquisition by Warner-Lambert, Entenmann's has changed ownership several times. The business is currently part of George Weston Bakeries, Inc., based in Horsham, Pa.