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## 1898 - Louis Loewenstein Opens Poultry Stand at Gratiot Central Market in Detroit



Marshall Loewenstein 1990

Inside a massive warehouse in Taylor is an 80,000-square-foot freezer filled with rows and rows of holiday gift turkeys and hams.

Also on the premises are countless Chef's Pride brand barbeque chickens.

It is autumn, but Loewenstein Poultry and Game President Marshall Loewenstein is wearing a down coat. He is walking through a zero degree freezer, where icicles and a bit of snow greet him at the entrance.

"This business isn't very romantic," says Marshall Loewenstein, great-nephew of the company founder, Louis Loewenstein.

The company has gone through tremendous change since Louis Loewenstein, a German immigrant, founded what was basically a retail chicken and turkey stand at the Gratiot Central Market in Detroit in 1898.

At the time, there, were no supermarkets and specialty shops. Retail markets were filled with individual vendors, some selling produce, others fish, others poultry.

The business was retail. Everything was fresh, and merchants came to the market regularly to get their food supplies. Even in the Depression, the business remained afloat.

"People had to eat," Marshall Loewenstein says. "When the food business goes bad, we know the whole economy has gone to hell. The last thing, people give up is eating."

Marshall's father, Max, worked with his father, Simon, in the meat vending business. When it became difficult to work with his brother Alfred, Max left the company in the 1930s and joined his uncle, Louis Loewenstein. In 1939, Max purchased the poultry company from his uncle.

"He said he wanted a place for his son to work," Marshall recalls.

Until 1954, the business remained a retail store. Then, with the input of Marshall, who had just finished college and joined the company, the poultry business changed focus from retail to wholesale. The future was in supermarkets, Marshall thought, and people would no longer frequent the stands.

They began selling to restaurants and food service places looking for chicken suppliers. The business became lucrative. In 1971, after Max retired, Marshall sold the food service enterprise to concentrate on holiday business, becoming a food brokerage house.

Last year the company sold 300,000 gift boxed turkeys to companies that give them as gifts to their employees at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

In 1987 the business expanded with the purchase of Michigan Cold Storage which stores frozen and refrigerated foods for other companies.

Today, the business is run throughout the Midwest by Marshall; his wife Phyllis; and his daughter Judy Loewenstein Roberts.

His three sons didn't remain in town with the family business, but Mark opened a similar gift turkey and ham business in Chicago called Loewy Foods.

“Today, in this day and age, family businesses are not as prevalent”, Marshall says. “it takes a special kind of situation to have a family business stay together. We’ve been able to feed a lot of families for 92 years.



**Marshall Loewenstein,  
Mark Loewenstein and  
Max Loewenstein (l to r) 1960**