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The Gretsch Company Celebrates 135 Years of That Great Gretsch Sound and Family Legacy

The year 2018 will be an especially busy one as Gretsch celebrates 135 years of being a manufacturer of the world's finest guitars and drums with customers, fans, business partners, and artists. These 135 years also represent a family legacy unlike any other in the music industry. Today—as it has been throughout the company's history—Gretsch is all about family.

The Gretsch Company was founded in 1883 when a German immigrant named Friedrich Gretsch opened a small musical instrument shop in Brooklyn, New York. When Friedrich died suddenly in 1895, his fifteen-year-old son, Fred Gretsch Sr., took over the company. Initially he was aided by his mother, Rosa, who was by all accounts a remarkable woman. By the turn of the 20th century, young Fred had expanded the business significantly. In 1916 he built a ten-story building at 60 Broadway, in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. Though the factory is no longer in operation, the building remains as a neighborhood landmark—and a continuing tie between the Gretsch family and its Brooklyn roots.

"We're one of the few remaining musical instrument manufacturers that is still family owned," said current president, Fred W. Gretsch. I'm the fourth generation and am delighted to have the fifth and sixth generations of family members involved in the business my great-grandfather started in 1883. He would be proud that his entrepreneurial gene continues to be passed down to each generation."

Fred Gretsch is the son of William Walter "Bill" Gretsch and the nephew of Fred Gretsch Jr. He began working in the family business in the 1960s, and as a young man he looked forward to taking his place as the fourth generation to run the Gretsch company. But in 1967, amid widespread change in the industry, Fred's uncle sold the Gretsch operation to the Baldwin Piano Company.

After that sale, Fred continued working for the company, relocating to suburban Chicago from Brooklyn. Later he founded his own business as wholesaler of musical instruments. But he vowed that he would one day make Gretsch a family business again. He was able to make good on that vow in 1985, when he brought the company back into family ownership—the only time in the history of the music industry that this has been accomplished.

Along the way, Fred has enjoyed the partnership of his wife, Dinah. A remarkable businesswoman in her own right, today Dinah serves as CFO of the Gretsch Company. She also oversees the extensive educational and philanthropic initiatives that the Gretsch family supports, including the Gretsch Foundation, the Mrs. G's Music Foundation, and scholarships and facilities funding at schools across the country.

Dinah commented about the anniversary, "Just like our milestone anniversaries of the past, the Gretsch Company's 135th will be chocked full of fun ways to celebrate our family, our history, our relationships, and the pride we have of being in business for 135 years."

Commenting on the Gretsch family continuity, Fred has said, "When you add it all up, it's a whole lot of years, with the company guided by a series of exceptional leaders starting with my great-grandfather Friedrich. My grandfather, Fred Sr., put forty years into the business. My uncle, Fred Jr., had forty-nine years in the business, and now there's me with fifty-three years, my wife Dinah with thirty-nine, and our daughter Lena with twenty-four."

Dinah added, "When I'm asked what the most important aspect of the Gretsch family's connection to the business is, I always say that Fred and I have 'the three Ps': passion, pride, and persistence. We have

such passion for the business, and we're so proud of it. But perhaps persistence is the key...because we know that we always have to be the best. And no one can ever tell us we cannot do something. As an example, look at Fred's dream of wanting to buy the Gretsch business back from Baldwin. It was his persistence in pursuing that dream that ultimately made it a reality."

January's 2018 NAMM Show in Anaheim, California will kick off the 135th Anniversary celebration with Fred and Dinah, along with several generations of family members, attending and being visible in the Gretsch Guitar, Gretsch Drum, and Bigsby booths. A special, full-color 135th Anniversary Gretsch House Telegram newsletter with timeline poster on the reverse has been produced and will be shared with visitors.

"Today's Gretsch guitars and drums are the finest and most consistently built instruments in our 135-year history," added Fred. "The recipes my father, uncle, grandfather, and great-grandfather used in creating "That Great Gretsch Sound" generations ago are still used today. This is truly the second Golden Age for Gretsch."

Finally, there are the thousands of Gretsch guitar and drum owners around the world, who quite correctly consider themselves part of the Gretsch family. These musicians know and value the history behind their instruments, as well as the unique personal connection that they share with Fred and Dinah Gretsch, and with the 135-year-old Gretsch family legacy.

Thank you for sharing the Gretsch Company's 135th Anniversary with us throughout 2018!