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Wednesday, February 28, 2001

Late
Update

Offshore investors may get part back

By Cliff Peale
The Cincinnati Enquirer

Investors in an offshore bank founded by two Greater Cincinnati businessmen stand to get at least some of their money back.

Operators of Wellington Bank and Trust Ltd., John Brinker of Clermont County and Gary Bentz of Loveland, settled with federal and state investigators Tuesday.

In an order and injunction filed in U.S. District Court in Indianapolis, the pair agreed to stop selling securities, turn over proceeds from the sales to investors, freeze remaining assets and have an accountant count the remaining funds, state and federal officials said.

While neither admitting nor denying wrongdoing, Mr. Brinker and Mr. Bentz agreed to the order to settle any civil charges by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and the Indiana Securities Commission, said Kevin McShane, their Indianapolis-based attorney.

Paul Montoya, branch chief of the SEC's Midwest regional office in Chicago, said the scheme included at least 256 investors in 11 states who paid Mr. Brinker and Mr. Bentz at least \$7.1 million in the past two years.

Besides the two men, the order included Wellington Bank and Trust, a bank based in Grenada, CastleRock Consulting in Cincinnati and several other companies.

The settlement concludes lengthy investigations by the SEC, as well as state officials in Indiana but does not preclude any criminal action against Wellington, Mr. Brinker, Mr. Bentz or other companies operated by the two men, attorneys on both sides said.

Mr. Brinker and Mr. Bentz did not return calls seeking comment.

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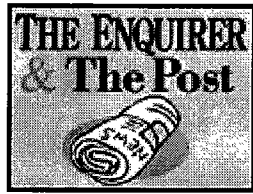
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