

# Blanton's History

It all started when "Uncle George" talked Harold E. Blanton into moving to Packwood in the late 1950s. Harold E. is the father of Harold H. Blanton, who is the father of Hal, who runs the business today. Spanning three generations, Blanton's Market now carries a long tradition of a friendly caring business within the community.

After his arrival in Packwood, Harold E. bought and operated the Packwood Café, located where Packwood Outpost is now. After a few years, he sold the café and built Harold's Recreation, a restaurant, soda fountain, and billiard hall where Peters Inn sits now.

On April 1, 1977, Harold E. and Harold H. moved operations across the street and opened Blanton's Mini-Mart, a one-room 2,000 square foot store where Packwood Spirits and Quilts is now. About 1979, it was expanded to 3,300 square feet.

The Mini-Mart was the last venture for Harold E. and Harold H. together. Harold E. retired in the early 80s and later passed just a few days short of his 90th birthday.

In 1981, Hal Blanton joined the business with his dad and granddad. The Mini-Mart now had a meat counter and that was Hal's introduction to the grocery business. Previously, he worked for Kentucky Fried Chicken, and as an agent with the National Federation of Independent Businesses.

In 1982, the local mercantile store, Bob's Trading Post, burned down leaving a need for expanded grocery services in Packwood. The Packwood Café building also was destroyed in the fire. When it became apparent that Bob's Trading Post would not be rebuilt, the Blanton's began thinking about a major expansion. "If we didn't do something, somebody else might come and build a larger grocery store to service the needs of Packwood," said Hal. "We started making plans about the middle of 1985."

Over the next three years, it became clear a new building was the best plan to best serve the Packwood community. The nearest large supermarket was 75 miles away in either direction along Highway 12 – Chehalis or Yakima. More people were moving to the area, having discovered the jaw-dropping beauty and affordability of the area. Additionally, engineering and parking space problems with the mini-mart location made it impractical to expand there. Also, local residents were requesting the development. They want greater selection and services in the community. Hal relates the words of one local woman who, when broached about the expansion, said, "You owe it to us."

Months before the construction started, the Mini-Mart moved to being open 24 hours a day. This helped the new store open more smoothly. Staff doubled from 7 to 14 people and they were all trained by the time the new store opened.

Ground was broken in 1987 in the present location. Another April 1 opening dawned in 1988 and Packwood had its first modern full-service grocery running 8,000 square feet. Opening weekend festivities included a free drawing of a trip to Reno, free samples and bicycle giveaways. They even had a piano player serenading customers on a baby grand brought in from Onalaska.



Harold H. continued to be active in the business until his retirement in 1994. He passed away in 2013. He stated, "Packwood is such a wonderful place to come to, particularly in the summertime." He couldn't imagine a better place to live or retire. He also felt it was important for his family and him to contribute to the community. "We feel a real obligation, a real responsibility to the Packwood community and all of the East Lewis County community. We strive very hard to put back into the community," he said.



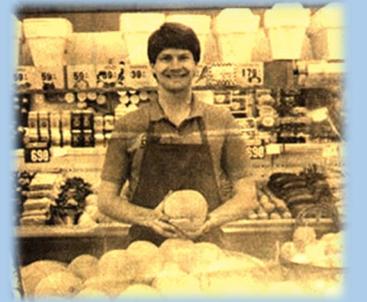
With the new facility up and running, Blanton's returned to focusing on maintaining the same friendly service that brought people into their old store. "This is a people business," said Hal, "In a small town, it's especially important to treat people like they're part of your family instead of just taking their money."

To make sure that "friendly old-fashioned service" was not just a slogan, employees were encouraged to chat with customers throughout the store. "We don't need to be an assembly line here," stated Hal. Scanners were later installed to improve customer service.



Within a few years, with a growing business, the idea of expansion was again on the table. On April 1, 1993, the store celebrated their expansion to 12,000 square feet. In May, Blanton's became affiliated with IGA. "Being affiliated with IGA is a perfect fit for us," said Hal. Growth continued. Aligned with Blanton's vision to continually improve and create the best place to shop and work, the deli extensively remodeled in 2017.

In the enlarged store, the meat department nearly doubled in size, continuing today to cut meat and honor special order requests of customers. There was twice the room in the frozen foods, beverage and dairy cases. The aisles are wide enough for two-way traffic. A Washington wine display, popcorn machine, hot coffee, deli and complete movie rentals offered additional conveniences and services.



The new store offered Packwood and surrounding area residents quality merchandise, greater selection, value and better customer service. Blanton's Market continues with its tradition of one-on-one personal touch and a wide variety of food choices and services. When you shop with us, you'll be greeted with that same friendly, old-fashioned service Blanton's Market occurring since 1977.

"We like it here and plan to continue to contribute to the community," states Hal Blanton. Blanton's carries on the tradition of contributing to the community with several events through out the year – Moonlight Madness, Community Breakfast, Santa Village are just a few. We support White Pass's Student of the Month and regularly contribute to sporting events for White Pass and Morton schools. Blanton's plans to remain a staple in the community for years to come.

We look forward to seeing you soon.

