



An excerpt from the book...

Rock County Roots: *History of Local Businesses*

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Blain's FARM & FLEET®

Janesville Born, Janesville Proud



Blain Supply Milestones

1955 Bert and Claude Blain founded Farm & Fleet, opening their first store in Janesville.

1960 Bert & Claude Blain opened the first Blain Supply corporate offices in October on Racine Ave. just east of Randall. They also opened 11 more stores in the 1960s.

1971 Blain Supply moved to its present site on Racine Avenue and Wright Road.

1975 Bert's son Robert Blain joined Blain Supply, Inc.

1979 The roof collapsed in January under a heavy snowfall, severely damaging the accounting department.

1985 Jane Blain Gilbertson joined Blain Supply, Inc.

1998 Robert & Jane acquire sole ownership of the company from Claude Blain's side of the family.

2003 Their website, FarmandFleet.com, was launched.

2014 Jane acquires sole ownership of the company when Robert retired from the company.

2018 Blain's Farm & Fleet announces expansion into Michigan with the first two of several stores, adding to its store base in Wisconsin, Illinois and Iowa.



Janesville Store Milestones

1955 The first Farm & Fleet store was opened in Janesville on the 300 block of West Milwaukee Street.

1958 The Janesville store moved to its third location, commonly known as 5-points.

1963 A major fire at an adjacent furniture refinishing company destroyed much of the 5-point store's inventory that was warehoused in the same building.

1968 Retail discount laws changed so discount cards were no longer needed to shop at Farm & Fleet.

1971 The store moved to its present location on Old Humes Road, now offering over 48,000 square feet of merchandise.

1989 The Janesville store was again expanded and renovated culminating with a huge Grand Opening Celebration.

1994 A free-standing warehouse addition was completed.

2011 Another major renovation increased the store to its present size, over 169,000 square feet. Another huge Grand Re-Opening event was held in October.

Blain's Farm & Fleet has proudly served the Janesville community since 1955 when brothers, Claude & Bert Blain founded the family company.

Originally from Weyerhaeuser, WI, Claude and Bert searched for a Midwestern location with a strong farm business climate. Janesville, Wisconsin was the perfect solution. In 1955, the Blain brothers opened their first Farm & Fleet store in a rented eleven hundred square foot former meat market in downtown Janesville. In 1960 the management offices moved from northern Wisconsin to Janesville.

Claude and Bert's philosophy was simple - always offer customers good, honest value by providing the best brands available, at the most competitive prices possible. This remains the cornerstone of the business today.

Store growth and renovation has been a hallmark for Blain's Farm & Fleet stores. In 2018, Blain's Farm & Fleet will open the first two stores of several planned for Michigan. Farm & Fleet now has 40 stores in Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa and Michigan.

Over the years Blain's has shown its commitment to Janesville by building and expanding the corporate buying offices and distribution center. Continual renovation of the 600,000 sq. ft. distribution center allows for additional expansion of the services to existing and future stores.

As the business grew, second and third generation family members joined the company. In 1998, Robert Blain and Jane Blain Gilbertson, Bert's children, became the sole owners of Blain Supply and all Blain's Farm & Fleet stores. In 2014, Robert retired and Jane became the sole owner of Blain Supply and all Blain's Farm & Fleet stores.

Through a steady focus on the founding business principles, the hard work of committed associates, and its loyal customers, Blain's Farm & Fleet will continue its rich tradition of growth and success.

Read the entire story in *The Rock County Roots: History of Local Businesses* book, which will be available through Rock County Historical Society in April of 2018

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