



About Big Bear

History
Opportunities

Our Stores

What's New
Bakery
Deli
Floral
Meat
Produce
Seafood
Pharmacy
Store Brands
Party Planner
Fine Wine
Store Finder

Community

Events
Online Recipes

Contact Us

Feedback

Web Specials

Coupons
Specials

Home



Big Bear operates more than 70 stores in Ohio and West Virginia under the Big Bear and Big Bear Plus banners.

The History of Big Bear

Big Bear Stores was founded in November 1933, in the depths of depression, by Wayne E. Brown, a dynamic individual with his own vision of the future of food distribution and retailing.

The first Big Bear Store opened on February 15, 1934, in a large building across from Ohio State University, on Lane Avenue. In what was once a dance hall, a roller skating rink, and finally a tan bark ring for horse shows, the first Big Bear store opened - the beginning of self service supermarketing in the Midwest.



This new kind of "grocery store" received quick acclaim from shoppers, who responded by purchasing a volume of merchandise considered phenomenal in those days. Within a year, a second store opened in Columbus. By the end of the second year, two more stores had been opened, followed by stores in Lancaster, Marion, Newark and Toledo. "The Bear" had begun to grow!



From 1934 until the

present day, the company has continued to be a leader and innovator in the supermarket industry. Big Bear was the first supermarket in the country to use cashier-operated motorized conveyor belts and the first to use an IBM mainframe computer. Big Bear has also been a pioneer in establishing supermarket service departments, developing a strong reputation for its high quality produce, meat, deli and bakery departments. Its Big Bear Plus stores were among the first superstores combining a supermarket with a general merchandise store.

In 1989, **The Penn Traffic Company** purchased Big Bear Stores. Since 1993, Big Bear Stores has been a division of the **Penn Traffic Company**.

The most important factor in the success of Big Bear over the years is the quality of the employees who make up the company. The policy of hiring strong associates, training them to serve customers in a friendly and courteous manner, and promoting from "within" the organization created the spark that make Big Bear the success that it is today.

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