

COBORN'S



Times photo by Steve Wolt
Grocers Bob, Dan and Bill Coborn, shown outside their Sauk Rapids store, attribute their firm's success to a family attitude.

A family grocery grows up and out

By SHERI BREEN
Times Staff Writer

Central Minnesota grocery shoppers enjoy access to a giddy array of stores, services and specialty departments.

But in eight communities, food consumers have at least one thing in common — Coborn's Inc.

Coborn's has been around since 1912, but in the past year the chain has expanded dramatically by opening a Cash Wise discount store in Waite Park and remodeling its store on Eight Street North in St. Cloud. The company is planning to remodel and expand its store on Fifth Avenue South.

Leadership for the family-owned business comes from the four Coborn brothers — Bob, Dan, Bill and Ron.

Their grandfather, father and uncle started the family trade in 1912 with a produce market on Sauk Rapids' Broadway Avenue.

But it was not until the third generation assumed the reins of corporate responsibilities in the late

“We have a pretty good handle on what's going on.”

Dan Coborn
President of Coborn's

1950s that Coborn's really grew. Eight of the nine Coborn's grocery stores and all of the company's five off-sale liquor establishments have been added in the past 20 years.

Besides the two St. Cloud stores and the Waite Park Cash Wise, Coborn's has stores in Sauk Rapids, Sartell, Foley, Clearwater, Little Falls and Willmar.

Continued expansion is no accident, according to Dan Coborn, 52, second-oldest of the brothers and president of the corporation. Because of state tax structure that “almost forces you to reinvest,” new stores have been part of a long-range plan, he said.

Rapid expansion is not always easy.

The Coborn's Willmar operation was in financial trouble until it was converted to the first Cash Wise discount store in 1979. And with the opening of the Waite Park Cash Wise store, sales at the conventional Coborn's supermarkets in the St. Cloud area dropped off, Coborn said.

That effect was not unexpected. And the sales have picked up again at most of the stores.

Overall, gross sales have quadrupled in the past five or six years, Coborn said, while profits have remained fairly constant at 1 percent of gross sales, a typical industry figure.

But even more importantly, “we're dedicated to expanding and providing advancement opportunities

for key young people we have in the organization,” Coborn said.

An on-the-job management training program has brought young Coborn's employees into the ranks of management for many years. Coborn attributes much of his corporation's success to the 650 full- and part-time workers at the grocery and liquor stores.

Bob Thueringer, 32, is now vice president of operations. But he started at the Sauk Rapids Coborn's store at 16, working part-time as a carryout and stock boy.

Thueringer considers himself an example of the company's philosophy. After graduating from Cathedral High School and St. Cloud State University, Thueringer was offered a full-time position in the Coborn's personnel department.

“It's been very good for me,” Thueringer said. “And we've carried on that philosophy in dealing with the young people we have now. It's been a key to some of our success.”

As the son of the company owner, Coborn's/8A

“Our closing time wasn't a set hour, but when the last person was off the street.”

1970

Determined to Diversify

Changing consumer habits and more women in the workforce triggered significant changes in the grocery industry in the 1980s. Stores not only got bigger, but also offered more services focused on providing one-stop shopping for customers. More competitors sought the grocery store dollar and Coborn's responded with a diversified portfolio and bold moves to deliver customers with more convenience and value.

Shifting dynamics in homes, work schedules and business culture in 1981 challenged Coborn's to revisit its hours of operation. A change in hours did not come easy for workers and required changes in operations. As they prepared for the change, company leaders encouraged employees to think like a customer. It was that customer-centric attitude that first set the company's daily hours of operation 40 years earlier.

"Our closing time wasn't a set hour, but when the last person was off the street," Bill Coborn remembers about working for his father at the store in the 1940s.

Coborn's decided to extend its hours after evaluating the results of a survey and sales study of the first and last hours the stores were opened. The number of sales signaled a strong desire by customers to shop in stores before 8 a.m. and after 9 p.m.

"The number of families with both spouses working has increased over the past decade," said Bob Thueringer, who retired as the company's chief operations officer in 2014, but served as personnel/operations director at the time. "With work time now occupying what was once time available for duties in the home, the need to shop at different or late hours has created a need for extended hours in the supermarket. By not meeting this need, we are encouraging our customers to shop elsewhere, as well as missing an opportunity to generate additional sales."

Within five years, several of the company's stores extended their hours to stay open 24 hours a day.

1980

1981

Expands store hours and begins going to 24 hours in next five years

1990

Bob Thueringer

Personnel/Operations Director - circa 1980



“Baggers learned about the importance of using the correct bag.”



Streamline Operations

Change became Coborn's middle name in the 1980s. The company kept adapting to new trends and responding to consumer needs, and its processes, people and products needed to evolve, too. Optical scanning was just the beginning.

Coborn's kept imagining what would come next and challenged employees to consider the idea of automatic bagging machines, talking scanners and electronic payment transfer systems that would make writing checks obsolete. The ideas sounded farfetched, but the company knew scanning was just the beginning of the technological changes that the grocery business would need to embrace.

“We have come a long way over the years,” Bill Coborn said. “From full service to self-service and mechanical registers, the change has been remarkable.”

Coborn's also implemented a new computer system for accounting. The system brought new efficiencies and accuracy to the company's accounting processes. For the first time, the company identified employees with a number and automatically tracked each employee's vacation and sick time.

While sales rose for Coborn's, the company practiced good stewardship and focused on ways to increase profitability. Coborn's educated its employees on how they could do their part to help the company succeed. Baggers learned about the importance of using the correct bag and picking up bags that fell on the floor. The company taught managers about understanding their customer patterns and properly scheduling teams at their stores. While these practices seem rudimentary, executing them consistently defined the company and made a significant impact on the bottom line.

Sauk Rapids grocery bagger packs 'em in



Times photo by Jason Wachter

Rob Wintheiser finished another perfectly packed bag of groceries while working Wednesday at Coborn's in Sauk Rapids.

Wintheiser recently won the state grocery bagging championship. He'll take part in the national finals in January.

Coborn's worker bags state title

Pack 'em with peaches on top

Rob Wintheiser, the state's grocery bagging champ who works at Coborn's in Sauk Rapids, gives some packing tips:

- Put the heavy stuff on the bottom, stuff like cans and jars. Keep the bag gets away from the sides, so if they're cushioned.
- Pack bread and other crushables on top.
- Bag soap separately and then put it with other groceries. That way your food doesn't smell like soap. If there's enough soap, stash it all in its own bag.
- Don't overfill a bag and keep it square.
- Put the cold stuff together, especially during the summer.
- Pack produce in its own bag. But beware: it's difficult to make a good square bag out of produce.
- “Above all,” Wintheiser says, “use good common sense. Don't put peaches on the bottom of a bag.”

money to be made here. I'm not sure, but I heard (first place) was \$10,000. This is the first year the Minnesota Grocers Association has held a bagging contest. Nationally, there has been one for several

The pressure was on at the state competition. Wintheiser estimated that he and Maria Laudenbach plan to marry next summer. That's where this bagging contest really comes in.

By JOHN DuBOIS
Times Staff Writer
Rob Wintheiser bagged himself an unusual honor. He's the state's best grocery bagger. Wintheiser, who works for Coborn's, 110 First St. S, Sauk Rapids, won the 1989 Best Bagger Contest at the Minnesota Grocers Association convention last weekend. That earned him a spot in the Best Bagger Contest at the National Grocers Association convention in January in San Antonio, Texas. Oddly enough, Wintheiser isn't a career bagger. “Now,” he says, “even though it has gotten me pretty far. It's just a job to get me through college—unless Coborn's has a job for me at the corporate office, say something in computers.”

Wintheiser, 21, 408 Benton Drive N, Sauk Rapids, is a sophomore at St. Cloud State University. He studies computer science.

He looks forward to next summer, when he and Maria Laudenbach plan to marry. That's where this bagging contest really comes in.

People SECTION B

Food/Consumer

Beef cookoff/
Restaurant's m
Recipe colum

Overall, Coborn's stores were becoming more sophisticated and along with that came a strong focus on creating an engaging customer experience — something the company's leaders have focused on since the inception of the Coborn's brand.

"Courteous customer relations or the lack of them is the difference between 'A Store' and 'My Store' to the customer," said Ron Coborn, who managed the dairy and frozen food departments for the stores and served as treasurer of the company.

A new, larger store in Sartell would be among the first stores to reflect a more sophisticated style. The Sartell store, initially nestled in a small strip mall, would become a 26,000-square-foot store of distinction with more of that space dedicated to selling than its previous stores. That meant more selection, stock and style. "This new store will provide a first-class food store that the community has long needed and deserved," Dan Coborn said before it opened.

Coborn's partnered with the city of Sartell to gain financing to open the expanded store in December 1981.



ner

SCHMIDT

Monitor finds kids

Million children are in the United States. This is frightening statistic. The inventor has a guardian angel, a device to monitor the location.

A small transmitter special belt worn by a child wanders beyond its range, or if the transmitter is not receiving the signal.

The receiver is about 1-inch square and made of colorful plastic. The receiver is a sectional antenna that emits sounds, will be used to trace his

An alarm if the child wanders beyond its range, and is placed in a drain-pan style refrigerator. Inventor Elwood

used to keep the child safe. It is available in order for more information, call

Send up in the air. It is difficult to see. It is able to

Associations to use the device. It is a bubble. It is just a device. It is with mitts. It is placed. It can be



Times photo by Tom Roster

While his father, David Winkels, fills a bottle at the Cash Wise Fountain Fresh machine, Alex, 20 months, takes a drink.

Pour your own pop

Food mart sells sodas in bulk for less

By DEBORAH HUDSON

Times Staff Writer

St. Cloud's newest soda fountain serves cherry colas and other fountain favorites by the bottle instead of the glass.

Customers at Cash Wise Food Mart in Waite Park are used to buying corn meal, noodles and candy in bulk. But it's a new twist to have customers choose from 30 flavors of pop that they can dispense into 2-liter, plastic bottles.

Called Fountain Fresh, the machine allows customers to choose from a variety of flavors — some of the more unusual choices include peach, banana, sarsaparilla and pina colada — or mix their own combinations, soda-fountain style.

Store manager Larry Warhol said Monday that after three days of operation, Fountain Fresh already represented 20 percent of the store's pop sales.

Part of the attraction, Warhol said, is the price. The cost to fill the first bottle is 89 cents. Customers bring the bottle back for refill, which costs 69 cents.

A comparable 2-liter bottle of 7-Up or Diet Coke costs between \$1.29 and \$1.59.

Cash Wise, a division of Coborn's, has had a lot of success with the bulk food concept, according to division manager Thomas Machula.

"We already have more than 200 bulk items in bins and barrels," said Machula. "Bulk pop seemed the way to go." The Fountain Fresh set-up in Cash Wise is the only machine like it in the five-state area, he said.

Cash Wise officials are pleased with its success so far, Warhol said. To encourage people to try Fountain Fresh, Cash Wise is giving unlimited free samples of the flavors and offering 20-cent coupons that in effect give the customers their first plastic bottle free.

To operate the machine, the customer first decides on a flavor.

Besides traditional sodas such as cola, root beer, lemon-lime, orange and grape, there are dispensers for charged or sparkling water. There also are several diet versions and a caffeine-free cola. The more exotic flavors include peach, red creme, pink lemonade, strawberry daiquiri, black cherry, fruit punch and orange-pineapple.

The customer attaches a paper filter to the machine and presses the button next to the selected flavor. The carbonated water is automatically dispensed and mixed with the flavored syrup in the funnel before it goes into the bottle. It takes about 40 seconds to fill a bottle.

The syrup and water are cooled to 36 degrees so the product is dispensed cold, Warhol said.

The main advantage to the cold temperature is that the carbonation isn't lost as quickly as it is when pop is bottled in a plant, shipped and set on a shelf, Warhol said.

"A lot of our customers taste it and think that there is too much carbonation in it," Warhol said. "They aren't used to the pop tasting that fresh."

Several customers at the store Monday were returning to fill the bottles they had purchased

over the weekend. There is a small sink next to the machine that customers can use to wash their bottles out if they need to, Warhol said.

Customers can only put pop in Fountain Fresh bottles, otherwise the price scanning machines at the checkout counter will charge them for whatever bottle they bring in.

Brad Gorder of St. Cloud returned Monday for a second bottle of sarsaparilla, a root beer-like pop that he enjoyed as a child.

"I think this is a very good idea, and it's a very good variety," said Gorder. "I drink a lot of pop, and this I can afford. It saves a lot."

Scott Hanson of Sartell chose regular root beer, saying that it tasted as good as the Shasta brand of root beer. "I can see buying a lot of this," he said.

Some customers filled bottles with sparkling water, adding a splash of lemon or lime for a bit of flavor.

"This is a real sensible thing to do," said Rose Voesberg, Waite Park. Her two children enjoyed the banana and black raspberry flavors. "There's a lot less waste, too."

At first, many of the customers were a bit shy about trying the more unusual flavors, said Rose Mary McCarney. She has been on hand next to the machine to show customers how it works and to hand out coupons.

"It's a new product, and people are really fascinated by it," McCarney said. Early favorites were pina colada and red creme, she said.

Pop/5B

Pop

There are only 100 supermarkets in the United States and Canada that have Fountain Fresh, but Machula expects several Twin Cities warehouse supermarkets to install them within the next few months. The company is partly owned by General Foods.

If bulk pop is successful at this Cash Wise store, Machula said, the machines might be installed in another Cash Wise store in Mason City, Iowa.

Waite Park store officials hope to eventually sell 1,000 bottles a day, Machula said.

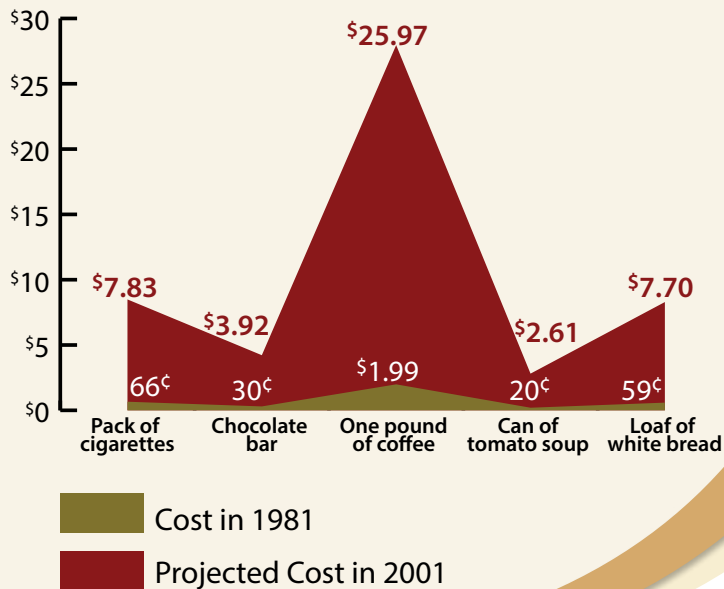
after car
Gannett News Service

RHINEBECK, N.Y. — Do bend too close to smell the lovely roses and zinnias on t

Cash Wise introduces Fountain Fresh Pop

Inflation Concerns

Increasing inflation raised concerns about the cost of goods in the 1980s. Coborn's calculated and reported projections for the cost of common goods, if inflation continued at its then rate of 13 percent per annum. Prices certainly increased well beyond those seen in the 1980s, but luckily never reached these projections:



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

“...we are committed to offering the best quality at the best prices”



Top: Deli Manager Ron Seanger
Bottom: Ron Seanger (center left) & Store Manager Chuck Binsfeld (center right) are greeted by the St. Cloud Chamber Top Hatters at Coborn's in Sartell - 1981

Coborn's paid particular attention to the store's layout to emphasize the fresh departments. The first step was the Coborn's Produce department that offered inviting displays of fresh fruit and vegetables. Lighting throughout the department was enhanced by a skylight over the company's first Y-shaped produce merchandising fixture.

The store's success led the company to soon remodel the Coborn's in Sauk Rapids to similarly put more emphasis on its fresh departments. A pizza shop, soup and salad bar, deli and scratch bakery were included. The combination of services provided convenient ready-to-go meals just as fast-food restaurants began to fill the landscape and busy families looked for ways to eat on the go. The store also debuted the company's first video store. Customers now could pick up dinner, wine and a movie with one stop.

“We are attempting to increase sales by providing additional variety in our supermarkets in both the foods and non-food areas, but at the same time, we are committed to offering the best quality at the best prices,” Ron Coborn said.



The fresh baked goods at the Coborn's store in Sauk Rapids became an attraction for customers and drove the company's decision to expand its in-store bakery. The operation ran while the store was closed overnight to prepare an assortment of bakery goods for the eight Coborn's stores. It grew with the stores and baked 300 loaves at once in its two large ovens.

"By the end of the night, the bakers had baked 20 different breads," Bill Coborn's oldest son, Mark, said. Mark joined the company as human resources manager after graduating from college, under the mentorship of then Personnel/Operations Director Bob Thueringer.

The expansion of the in-store bakery was just the first step in the company's commitment to providing customers with fresh baked goods. Many years later, the company would open a Central Bakery production facility next to its corporate office to supply its entire family of stores.



Central Bakery production facility on the corporate office campus - 1991

*“Expand as fast as you want,
he said, ‘but we’re not
borrowing any money.’”*

1982 Cash Wise Foods
groundbreaking celebration.

Left to right:
Dennis Rice, Rice Building Systems
Don Wetter, Coborn’s, Inc. executive vice president
Dan Coborn, Coborn’s, Inc. president
John Rice, Rice Building Systems



1980

Builds 50,000-square-foot
Cash Wise in Waite Park

1982

A new Cash Wise Liquor store replaces the
free-standing liquor store in Waite Park

1985

Becoming Cash Wise

As the company saw success in its sophistication in Sartell, Dan Coborn continued to explore the simplicity of the warehouse concept he started in Willmar.

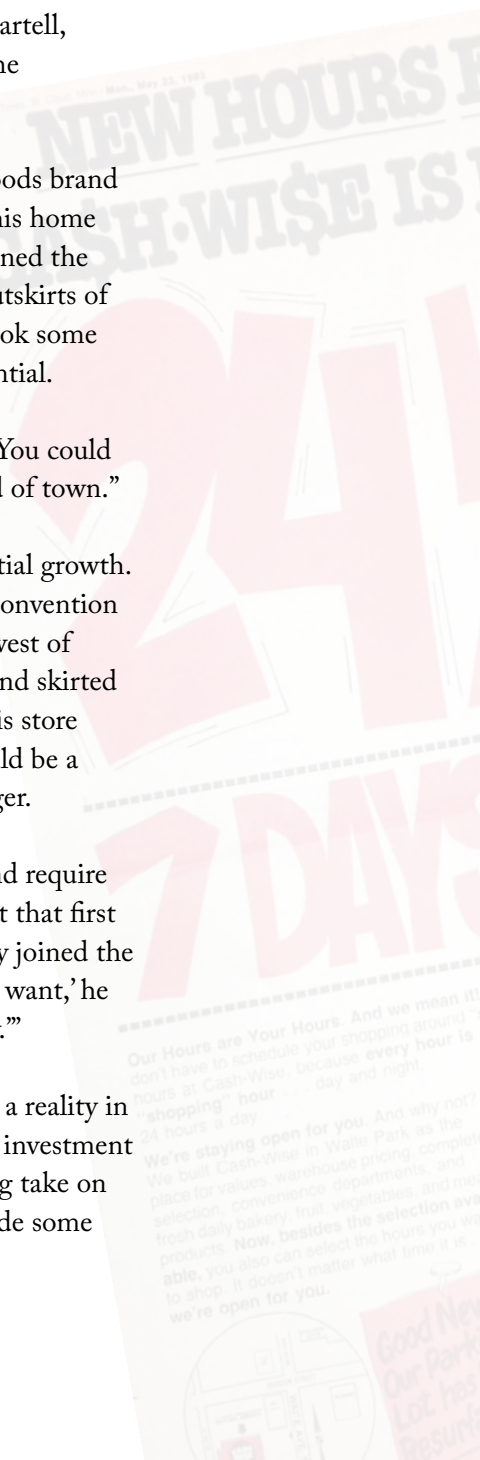
Early on, Dan saw the potential of the Cash Wise Foods brand and desired to replicate the success in Willmar near his home and the company’s offices in Sauk Rapids. He envisioned the next location while driving by an open field on the outskirts of St. Cloud in the neighboring city of Waite Park. It took some convincing for others in the company to see the potential.

“There really was nothing nearby,” Dan remembers. “You could see for miles. Development hadn’t started on that end of town.”

Grocers typically planned their stores around residential growth. The Waite Park Cash Wise Foods would break that convention with its lack of nearby residential development. Just west of St. Cloud, Waite Park sat northeast of Interstate 94 and skirted Minnesota Highway 15. Coborn’s needed to build this store under the “build it and they will come” theory. It would be a gamble that placed the Coborn’s operation as the wager.

It would be the company’s largest project to date – and require Dan to go against his father’s advice. “I’ll never forget that first conversation I had with my dad when I officially joined the business after college. ‘Expand as fast as you want,’ he said, ‘but we’re not borrowing any money.’”

Making the Cash Wise Foods store a reality in Waite Park would require a major investment from the company, a bank willing take on some risk and the city to provide some financial support.



1990

Risky Moves

Dan's plans were bold. They included a 4.5-acre lot with a 45,000-square-foot grocery store on one side and a 5,000-square-foot liquor store on the other. The grocery store would feel more like a warehouse and deliver more of a self-service shopping experience than customers had experienced in their current supermarkets. Customers would need to navigate a much larger store and bag their own groceries, but they would be rewarded in discounted prices.

It was far from what residents had known. None of the modern-day big box retailers had opened in the market yet. But Coborn's knew that would not last long and wanted to be first to deliver the experience. St. Cloud would be the first market where the company would operate both its traditional Coborn's grocery store and its Cash Wise Foods discount warehouse. "We had concerns about how it would affect the Coborn's brand," said Don Wetter, who was Dan's right-hand at the time.

Dan knew the risk, but saw the reward. He moved forward with plans to open the big box store in Waite Park. The company received industrial revenue bonds from the city of Waite Park to help finance the extensive building project that city leaders hoped would give way to additional business development. "Without their help and cooperation, this project would not have been possible," Dan said.

As the Coborn's leadership team planned for the opening of Cash Wise Foods, they elected to hire a store manager from outside the company who would bring experience running a warehouse-format grocery store. They hired Larry Warhol, who was a store manager at Red Owl Country Store in the Twin Cities. It proved to be a good decision. Larry served as store manager at Cash Wise in Waite Park until his retirement in December 2012.

Employees from all Coborn's stores and the corporate office came together to beat the clock and be ready



Above: Larry Loesch is greeted by the St. Cloud Chamber Top Hatters at Cash Wise Liquor in Waite Park - 1982



Larry Warhol
Cash Wise Waite Park
store manager
1982 - 2012

Larry Warhol, Retired Employee

I was in Bloomington at my Red Owl Country Store when I received a phone call and Dan Coborn was on the other end of the line. He explained a few things about the company and said he'd like to talk to me about coming up to work for Coborn's. I'd never heard of him. I later learned that before he called me, he apparently had come down to the store and talked to a few of my employees about me.

Dan asked me to meet him at the Ember's across the street from the Crystal Airport. He brought along his Personnel Manager, Bob Thueringer. As I sat in the restaurant, waiting for them, I realized I didn't even know who I was looking for. All the sudden, I see this plane coming up toward the fence. These two gentlemen walked out, came into Embers, and they introduced themselves as Dan and Bob. I was facing a big decision, not even knowing who these people were. Shortly after that life-changing meeting, my wife and I came up to St. Cloud to check it out. Dan had set some newspapers aside so I could look at the housing market, and we looked at the new store as the walls were going up. As she and I sat in the Menard's parking lot in our old station wagon, we decided to take a chance.

That was over 30 years ago and what a wonderful history we've had. I ended up managing the Cash Wise in Waite Park for decades and finishing a great career here."

*“the goose that laid
the golden egg”*



for opening day. Office staff, cashiers and stockers filled the store shelves. Department managers cut meat, baked bread, culled produce and set up the extensive deli case. Employees worked through the night to ensure each product had the correct price.

Rewards Follow

The Cash Wise Foods store in Waite Park opened in November 1982 with a diverse selection of goods and services, including a full deli and scratch bakery, and proved to be a success from day one. People filled the store as soon as the doors opened on Grand Opening Day. The company even had to bring in additional carts from the warehouse.

Customers waited in long checkout lines that snaked through the store's aisles. They received hospitality as Dan's wife, Mabel, served them cookies while in line and engaged them in lively conversation. Customers loaded bag after bag into their vehicles.

The new Waite Park Cash Wise Liquor store replaced the freestanding Coborn's Liquor store that the company opened nearby nearly a decade earlier in the city.

Soon after, the Coborn's stores in St. Cloud countered the new Waite Park Cash Wise Foods opening with an ad campaign called "Why Go Anywhere Else?"

The company initiated a facelift and expansion of the Fifth Avenue Coborn's store in St. Cloud. The store took on a more upscale look to appeal to a different





Coming Soon... To Serve You Better!

A New Cash Wise Food Mart and Liquor

Opening in Mid-October
North Side of the Kandi Mall
Over 53,000 sq. ft. to serve you better



Willmar Mayor and Management of Cash Wise



A Complete Store

FRESH PRODUCE

FRESH MEATS

DAIRY-FROZEN FOODS

IN-STORE BAKERY

DELI

LARGEST GROCERY SELECTION

group of customers and began offering homemade pizza, service deli and bakery departments. Coborn's expanded the store's produce, frozen food and dairy departments. The changes resulted in a significant increase in business at the store.

Ready for Expansion

The success of Cash Wise in Waite Park, often referred to as "the goose that laid the golden egg," gave the company the financial impetus for future growth. Two years later, Coborn's announced plans to build a larger Cash Wise store next to the existing store in Willmar. The decision followed a banner quarter with record sales that allowed the company to both build a new store in Willmar and expand the Waite Park store.

The company designed the new Willmar store after the Waite Park store that continued to see rising sales. Similar in size to Waite Park, the Willmar Cash Wise Foods featured a service bakery and deli department, as well as expanded meat, produce, frozen food and bakery departments. The company also added a salad bar, a pizza deli and more checkout lanes. "The Cash Wise Foods and Liquor concepts have



1980

*Builds larger Cash Wise store in Willmar
and moves previous store to that location*

1984

*Begins plan to expand
the Cash Wise brand*

1985

Rick Parker, Employee since 1981



My first full-time job with Coborn's was working as the receiving clerk at the Cash Wise store in Willmar. One morning, while forklifting product onto the pallet racking on the sales floor, I made a big mistake. The elevated pallet on the forklift caught a string of fluorescent lights, which came crashing to the floor. To make matters worse, there happened to be a mother with a small child in the same aisle. Needless to say, we had a problem. Thank goodness no one was hurt and we managed to clean up the aisle without incident. As I reflect back on this situation, what strikes me more than anything is how I was treated by my store manager, Brad Michelson. Brad certainly could have terminated my employment, but instead, he helped clean up the mess and understood I made a mistake and gave me the opportunity to continue my career with Coborn's. It's a great illustration of a company that cares about employees even through tough times. Thanks, Brad!

*Below:
1984 - Brad Michelson
Cash Wise Willmar
store manager*

Expands out of Minnesota with its first store in Mason City, Iowa

Coborn's formalized a series of customer relations policies in the 1980s. The policies focused on helping employees connect with customers and deliver high customer service at every store, no matter the size, style or surname. Here's a look at the policies Ron Coborn encouraged employees to put into practice beginning in 1981:

1. Greet all customers, within eight tiles of you, with a smile.
2. Serve all customers promptly – never keep them waiting.
3. Approach all customers who seem confused for any reason and ask "May I help you?"
4. When a customer requests information on a product area, take him to it.
5. When talking with a customer, give him your undivided attention.
6. Call a customer by name, if you know it, especially when cashing checks.
7. When checking and bagging, cease all conversation with other employees.
8. A rain check will be given to any customers wishing to purchase any Coborn's advertised item that is out of stock.
9. All merchandise is 100 percent guaranteed. Refunds will be issued on any item not acceptable to the customer.
10. Never argue with a customer.
11. Offer customers a hand basket if their arms are full.
12. Cashiers should stand in front of their checkout lane when they aren't busy to reinforce our commitment to customer service.

been very successful and as a result, we have outgrown the current location," Dan said.

The construction of the new store captured attention in the community with its 16,000-pound cement panels for the walls. The store's walls were so heavy that a truck could only carry two panels at a time.

As construction on the new Willmar Cash Wise Foods continued, Coborn's received national recognition for its ingenuity at the Waite Park Cash Wise Foods. Coborn's was among a select group of stores that earned an "A" for Outstanding Achievement from Progressive Grocer magazine. "They went after business by building new stores, upgrading existing stores and initiating promotions and merchandising programs that encouraged consumers to spend," Progressive Grocer said.

Employees in Willmar continued to run the existing Cash Wise Foods store while setting up the new store. They only closed the store for three days before opening the new, larger Cash Wise Foods. On the day it opened, the deli oven had not yet arrived, the new bakery was not operational and employees counted the tills on the floor.

Customers did not mind. By the afternoon, all of the store's carts were in use and each of the checkout lanes were at least 10 customers deep.

Cash Wise Footprint

The success now seen in both Willmar and Waite Park led Coborn's to initiate plans to roll out Cash Wise Foods stores in additional markets. The move would mean even more buying power for Coborn's and appeal to more customers in the increasingly competitive marketplace.

1990

Builds a new Cash Wise Foods store in Hutchinson
(pictured below)



The next store in the Cash Wise Foods expansion plans would mark the company's farthest endeavor to date. It would take Coborn's beyond the Minnesota border to Mason City, Iowa.

The company broke ground on the 53,000-square-foot store that would anchor one side of a new shopping center in the growing Iowa community of 30,000 residents. Walmart would anchor the other side. The store opened in September 1985 with a celebratory ribbon cutting and commendation of Coborn's by the city's mayor.

A year later, the company opened a Cash Wise Foods in a former Pamida, located in Hutchinson, a city in west central Minnesota, not far from the initial Willmar location. The store's success would lead the company to build a new store in Hutchinson in 1993.

Expanding the Cash Wise Foods brand would be the focus for the next decade. Within the first 10 years of starting the new Cash Wise Foods chain, the company would open seven stores and they all would carry the Cash Wise Foods name. Cash Wise Foods would again be at the center of the company's growth plans in 2012 when the company announced its largest expansion in history that would take the Cash Wise Foods brand into western North Dakota.

Proud to be a part.

Cash Wise Food Mart recently opened a fourth store in Hutchinson. Rice Building Systems has played a major part in all four. Construction and expansion in Waite Park. Construction in Willmar. Expert consultation on the Mason City building. The Hutchinson renovation. Cash Wise does it the Rice way because Rice Building Systems has for any building



Bruce Miller, Employee since 1976

Back in the late 90's Coborn's, Inc. made the decision to become a Cub Foods franchise operator. Our first location was in Hutchinson, MN. We already had a high-volume Cash Wise store there, so we moved that business, along with the staff to the newly built 60,000-square foot building just down the road, and operated it as a Cub Foods. We realized pretty quickly that this was not a change our customers were happy with. Volume dropped pretty dramatically and we were literally swamped with cards and letters from our customers asking that we go back to being a Cash Wise. It's hard to believe, but we actually created a "You spoke and we listened!" ad campaign featuring the original cards and letters. We moved back to our original building and changed back to Cash Wise. Business has been growing ever since.

Below Left:
November 1, 1984 Mason City Globe Gazette advertisement featuring the Cash Wise Foods Plus Card

Below:
Cash Wise Foods in Mason City

Savings Every Time You Shop Cash Wise Foods

Sign Up For A Cash Wise Plus Card Today And Enjoy Automatic Savings Every Time You Shop With Us.

Official Member PLUS CARD AUTOMATIC SAVINGS

Approximately 16 Chops Dubuque Assorted Pack **\$1.19** Lb. (Regular Price \$1.95 Lb.)

6 Ounce Cup Kemps Assorted Varieties **Classic Yogurt 4 \$1** For (Without Plus Card 4 For \$2.00)

4-Pack 40, 60, 75 Or 100 Watt GE Soft White **Light Bulbs 99¢**

With Plus Card

CASH WISE FOODS