

McDonald IGA

Founded: 1891

Location: Intersection of State Roads 135 and 45, Bean Blossom (1891–1962); 5028 North State Road 135 (1962– )

Charles “Kess” McDonald opened the C. K. McDonald Store in 1891. Kess, as all his friends called him, was born in the small town of Bean Blossom in 1876. At first he bought staples from area grocer Aaron Zody and operated the store out of his wagon. He drove a huckster wagon throughout much of Brown County, trading sugar, flour, coffee, and other staples for fresh produce, pelts, crafts, and sometimes cash. After making his trades he would take a two-day journey to Indianapolis to sell the goods. Eventually he opened a shop in Bean Blossom and operated it until his death in 1933.

Charles’s son Cecil “Herb” McDonald took over the business upon his father’s death, renaming it the C. H. McDonald Store. He had helped out in the store as a boy and had driven the wagon before joining the army in 1918. After World War I he moved to Indianapolis and worked in the poultry business. In 1933 he moved back to Bean Blossom to take over his father’s dwindling enterprise. He purchased a new truck from his brother Ival and continued the huckster route established by his father, continuing the delivery practice until 1954. His wife, Gladys Christie McDonald, also worked in the store and continued to do so into the 1990s. Their son Jack also labored in the business until he left for the air force in 1952.

From the 1890s through the 1950s the store maintained a small-town atmosphere. The aroma of fresh-brewed coffee greeted customers in the morning, and Kess, Herb, or

Gladys always took time to reminisce with old friends. In the 1960s, however, the atmosphere of the store began to change.

Jack and his wife, Nina Jo Lewis McDonald, had met at Indiana University. They graduated and married in 1961 and then took over management of the store the following year. Herb continued to work at the store until the early 1970s, but he handed the day-to-day operations to his son. Jack moved the business into a new building just north of the old store. He affiliated it with the Independent Grocers Alliance (IGA) in 1962, the year he took over, and eight years later he doubled the store's size to accommodate new products and services. Jack and Nina's three children grew up working in the business. Diana and Mike worked in the business during high school and continued during their college years, but they have since pursued other interests. James McDonald, a 1987 graduate of Franklin College, managed the store in 1998.