

From Jos. Kuhn & Co. author unknown
Champaign County Historical Archives

Shortly after the death of Joseph Kuhn, in December of 1915, Isaac gained full control of Jos. Kuhn & Co. In an effort to further the production of wool in the United States, Jos. Kuhn & Co. funded the purchase of several hundred ewes. These ewes were later distributed to boys 17 years old and younger. This allowed the boys to learn valuable farming skills while greatly increasing wool production throughout the country. This project was done in cooperation with the government's wool growing project along with Professor Coffey, a Professor in the College of Agriculture at The University of Illinois.

Just prior to the roaring 20's in 1919, Jos. Kuhn & Co. initiated a great sense of excitement in the retail industry. With sales on the rise and a very fashion conscious society in the Champaign area, Jos. Kuhn & Co. was making headlines. At this time, the use of commercial airplanes for shipping purposes was unheard of. Later that year, Isaac Kuhn became the first retailer to receive a shipment of clothing via commercial airplane. The



Isaac Kuhn and several spectators gather to welcome the shipment by air. (Isaac is fourth from the right)

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tremendous amount of public interest this sparked is evident in the following quote from the July 1919 issue of The National Clothier Magazine, "When Jos. Kuhn & Co. sent out the announcement inviting the people of their city and community to witness the arrival of the world's first airplane express service, the business really was inviting the people to witness an event that will doubtless mark a place in history." The plane landed in a field just South of Champaign Country Club, the event itself was a festival of sorts. People came from hundreds of miles away to witness. One eager spectator excitedly asked Isaac to open one of the cases of clothing. Isaac showed his great sense of generosity and presented the lucky spectator with a brand new suit, straight out of the box.

Throughout the middle 1900's Jos. Kuhn & Co. continued its prosperous growth and retained the reputation of "unmatched in 118 1/2 miles." Its leader, Isaac Kuhn, not only ran the store, but was a leader in the community as well. His many interests outside of the store included the University of Illinois, founding the Hillel Foundation on the campus, writing and publishing a book on Abraham Lincoln, and various other civic and fraternal affairs. Recognized as the "dean of Main Street," Isaac Kuhn was one of three men honored by the Grand Prairie Lodge, B'nai B'rith, as a member for over a half of century. This honor clearly exemplifies just how influential Isaac Kuhn really was to the Champaign-Urbana area.

Shortly after being publicly recognized by the Grand Prairie Lodge, in 1956, Isaac Kuhn fell ill and died on January 21st at the age of 89. The strong family involvement in the store carried on after his death. His son-in-law, B.B. Wiese



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