

JOSEPH KUHN, CITY'S OLDEST CLOTHIER, DEAD

Pioneer Merchant Stricken
With Apoplexy Late
Last Night.

LOCATED HERE IN 1865

Successful in Business but
Longed to be Farmer
—Liberal Contribu-
tor to Charity.

Joseph Kuhn, Champaign's oldest clothier and founder of the business of Joseph Kuhn & company, is dead. The end came suddenly at his home at 809 West University avenue about 11 o'clock last night. His death is attributed to apoplexy. *C. S. Daily Gazette*

Mr. Kuhn was at the store, 80 and 80 Main street, all day and spent the evening at home. About 10:30 he took a bath and prepared to retire but became suddenly ill. He called other members of the household and told them his condition was serious but they thought he was unduly alarmed. He, however, insisted that his end was near and bade them all farewell. Within a short time he was dead. His vitality was remarkable even until the end and he was conscious up to within a minute of the time he breathed his last.

Champaign Daily Gazette
28 December, 1915

77
With the passing of Joseph Kuhn Champaign loses her oldest clothier, and, with one exception, the oldest merchant in the city. A kindly old man who in his quiet way contributed thousands of dollars to charity has gone to his reward. He will be missed by many besides his business associates and close friends for he was a friend to scores of the friendless in a quiet unassuming way which caused no embarrassment and attracted but little attention. *C. S. Daily Gazette 1915*

As a merchant Mr. Kuhn was very successful, amassing a fortune and founding one of the city's largest mercantile establishments. His chief ambition, however, was never realized for he longed to be a farmer and horses were among his chief delights. It is said that he noted the advent of the automobile with regret and after giving up his family horse often expressed a longing to again keep a horse.

For years he kept a horse and it was his usual habit after driving down to the store in the morning to go to a nearby grocery and get an apple or potato for his horse, the animal following him down the street when he started for the grocery. He was a keen judge of horses and good animals always attracted his attention.

Born in Germany.

Mr. Kuhn was born in Greenstadt, Frankenthal, Germany, on April 14, 1837, and was one of a family of several children, all of whom are now dead. His father was engaged in the grain and horse buying business in his native town and young Kuhn early acquired a love for horses and for agriculture which remained a prominent trait of his character throughout his long and busy life.

He was influenced to leave Germany and come to America by an incident transpiring when he was about sixteen years old. While watching some soldiers drill one day he saw a petty officer kick one of the privates. "He'll never do that to me," resolved the lad and to escape military service he soon after left the country.

After spending two years in New York City, Mr. Kuhn went to Woodville, La., where a married sister was living at that time. For a time he bought cotton for his brother-in-law and later engaged in the business for himself, continuing in it until the out-

break of the Civil war. When the cotton was confiscated and burned at New Orleans to keep it from falling into the hands of the Federal soldiers, he was one of the heavy losers.

Served in Confederate Army.

Later Mr. Kuhn enlisted in the Confederate army and served two years, participating in the battles around Vicksburg and in several other desperate engagements.

After the close of the war Mr. Kuhn came north. He rented a building in LaFayette, Ind., and arranged to go into the clothing business there but before he could install his stock the building was destroyed by a fire which also swept several others. He then came to Champaign.

It is not known what induced Mr. Kuhn to select Champaign as a location, for the town was then only a struggling village. In telling of his early experiences he later related that he arrived here early in the morning and the streets were lined with wagons loaded with grain. This impressed him with the wonderful productivity of the country.

For several years Mr. Kuhn conducted a small clothing store in a frame building on the present site of the office of the W. W. Walls & company lumber yard, southeast corner of University avenue and Market street.

Store Blown Up With Dynamite.

Later he moved his store to the Kuller building, a frame structure which stood on Main street just east of the site of the Metzler & Schaefer grocery. In 1871 an old mill, standing across the street on the lot where now stands the Miller Harness company building, was destroyed by fire and to prevent the spread of the flames the Kuhn store was blown up with dynamite. The following year Mr. Kuhn completed the erection of the building at 48 Main street. Later he acquired the room at 43 Main street from H. D. Stoltey and threw the two rooms into one large room.

In 1888 Mr. Kuhn took into partnership his eldest son, Isaac, and on April 14, 1904, the business was incorporated as Joseph Kuhn & company. In 1908 the company erected the large building at 33 and 35 Main street, now occupied by the business. At that time Mr. Kuhn expressed a desire to be relieved of the principal cares of the business and most of his stock was taken over by his son, Isaac. This fact did not diminish his interest in the welfare of the business and he continued to give it his careful attention.

Tolled Early and Late.

It was his habit to arrive at the store before 7 o'clock each morning and he was usually the last man to leave the place in the evening. Yesterday morning he was at the store at the usual early hour and was there at closing time last evening.

During the more strenuous days of his business career Mr. Kuhn often opened his store before 6 a. m. and remained at his post until late at night, such being the custom of the pioneer merchants. It is said there was a friendly rivalry between Mr. Kuhn and his friend Schwitzer of the firm of Schwitzer & Wooly, who also conducted a clothing store. The two men would try to see who could be first to open his store. One morning Mr. Kuhn came down at 5:30 and found Mr. Schwitzer at his store but he was asleep in a chair in front of the door.

Mr. Kuhn wedded in 1865 Miss Lena Loeb of Louisville, Ky. She died about seven years ago in Florida where Mr. and Mrs. Kuhn were sojourning for the benefit of her health. Of the children born to them the following survive: Isaac Kuhn of this city, Arthur Kuhn, a fruit ranchman of Mosier, Ore.; Mrs. Sarah Kaufman of Fargo, N. D.; Rudolph Kuhn, a traveling representative of the Clothcraft company of Cleveland, O., who is now at Santa Barbara, Cal., enroute to Hawaii; Mrs. Charles Wolfe and Mrs. Rosetta Victor, both residing at the home of their father, 309 West University avenue, and Len Kuhn, a merchant at Watska.