



Joseph Kuhn and Co.  
Records, 1866-2001

Collection 90

## Champaign County Historical Archives

**Compiled by:** Marissa Krein

**Creator/Corporate Name:** Joseph Kuhn and Co.

**Inclusive Dates:** 1866-2001, bulk 1900-1965

**Physical Description:** 1 box (0.5 linear ft.)

**Language:** English

**Provenance:**

The Joseph Kuhn Co. collection materials were donated to the Champaign County Historical Archives in 2004.

**Access:**

These records are accessible to the public within applicable copyright restrictions and limited to use at the Champaign County Historical Archives of The Urbana Free Library.

**Historical Note:**

Joseph Kuhn (1837-1915) arrived in Champaign with his wife Lena Loeb Kuhn (1843-1906) in March 1865 and opened his first store in September 1865. The Emporium opened at 33 Main Street in Champaign at what is now the intersection of Market Street and Chester Street. The store was one of the largest in Champaign's business district and occupied the first floor of the building. Kuhn, his wife, and son, Isaac Kuhn (1866-1956), lived on the second floor. With the business district expanding, Kuhn decided to move his store to a larger space at 45 Main Street. However, this wooden building was destroyed in 1872 when the flourmill near the Illinois Central tracks caught fire. Kuhn was able to save most of inventory and reopened in 1873 in a newly constructed two-story brick building with a prominent glass window containing a gold star. The new store took its name from the star and was called the Star Clothing Store.

Isaac Kuhn joined his father at the store in 1888. He was not presented with any stock or money, but used his small savings to invest in the store. With the two Kuhns at the helm, the store continued to prosper. It was the only store in the area to have a wide section of men's clothing including business formal, and work attire. To advertise this vast inventory, the slogan was "Unmatched in 118-1/2 Miles" painted on the side of the building. In 1904, the store was incorporated as Jos. Kuhn & Son. Three years later with business still thriving, Isaac Kuhn moved the store to the newly erected four story building at 33-37 Main Street and also bought most of his father's stock in the store. Isaac revolutionized the business introducing the use of live models in his store including prominent University of Illinois athletes and becoming the first merchant to receive a shipment of clothing via commercial plane. He was also very involved in the community. He founded the Hillel Foundation at the University of Illinois and was involved in various civic and fraternal organizations including the Western Star Lodge.

Isaac remained in charge of the business with help from his son-in-law, attorney B.B. Wiese (1917-1998), until his death in 1956. With Isaac's death, Wiese assumed control of the store. With Wiese at the



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helm, the business expanded in women's clothing in 1958 and art supplies in 1970. A new location, Kuhn's Too, was also opened at the Market Shopping Center (closed in 1991). In 1981, Dr. William D. Youngerman, grandson of Isaac Kuhn, bought the business from B.B. Wiese and Helen Kuhn Wiese (1918-1992). Under Youngerman's leadership, the business again expanded with a new store opened in 1988 at Danville's Village Mall. Youngerman is still in charge today (2015) with manager Gordon Tracy attending to day-to-day business. The store is still located at the building built by Isaac Kuhn in 1907 and still serves the male population of Urbana-Champaign selling suits and accessories (2017).

**Scope and Content Note:**

This collection contains mix of family and company records including obituaries of Joseph Kuhn (1837-1915) and Isaac Kuhn (1866-1956), accounting book (1866-1871), newspaper articles about the Isaac Kuhn's travels, birthdays (1946 and 1950), early town memories, Jos. Kuhn & Company anniversaries: 90<sup>th</sup> (1955), 93<sup>rd</sup> (1958), 100<sup>th</sup> (1965), 115<sup>th</sup> (1980), and Isaac Kuhn's involvement in the community (1951-1954). Also includes Jos Kuhn & Company advertisements and pamphlets (1897-2001), briefs about the court case between Isaac Kuhn and Samuel and William D. Eppstein (1906-1909), correspondence of Isaac Kuhn (1933-1950), the history of the Joseph Kuhn's house, business memos and proposal (1956), and program for USO Dedication Banquet (1942).

**Separated Material:**

Photographs were removed from the collection and placed in the Joseph Kuhn and Co. (Champaign, Ill.) Photographs Envelope.

**Arrangement:**

This collection is arranged chronologically.

**Subjects Terms:**

Clothing trade--Champaign.  
Jews--Champaign--History.  
Main St (Champaign), 31  
Main St (Champaign), 37  
Main St (Champaign), 39  
Main St (Champaign), 41  
University Ave (Champaign), West, 309

**Name Terms:**

Eppstein, Samuel  
Eppstein, William D.  
Joseph Kuhn And Co. (Champaign, Ill.)  
Kuhn, Isaac, 1866-1956  
Kuhn, Joseph, 1837-1915  
Kuhn, Lena Loeb, 1843-1906



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**Container List:**

**Box 1**

- Folder 1: Joseph Kuhn & Co. account book, 1866-1871
- Folder 2: Joseph Kuhn & Son, advertisement, August 9, 1897
- Folder 3: *Chautaugua Journal*, vol. 2, no. 4 (Urbana, IL), July 1900 [advertisement for Kuhn's on page 30]
- Folder 4: Samuel Eppstein and William D. Eppstein, appellants, vs. Isaac Kuhn, appellee, concerning 41 Main Street, Champaign, Illinois, 1906-1909 [Brief and argument of appellants. Supreme Court of Illinois. This is an appeal from Champaign County Circuit Court.]
- Folder 5: The College Book, Maker of "College Brand Clothes," Fall and Winter, 1908-1909
- Folder 6: Rulers of the World by High Art Clothing, 1913
- Folder 7: Joseph Kuhn Obituaries, December 1915
- Folder 8: Efficient Credit System at Joseph Kuhn & Co. in *Tomorrow's Merchant*, April 1930
- Folder 9: Letter from Isaac Kuhn regarding bank crisis, March 9, 1933
- Folder 10: Letter from J.H. Tippett to Mrs. Joseph Kuhn, March 16, 1933
- Folder 11: Isaac Kuhn describes stay in Phoenix, AZ in newspaper article, May 17, 1935
- Folder 12: Letter to Isaac Kuhn concerning real estate (Lincoln Building, Champaign), April 9, 1940
- Folder 13: Birthday Wishes to Isaac Kuhn, 1941
- Folder 14: Program for USO Dedication Banquet, January 9, 1942
- Folder 15: 'In Days of Old... Champaign and Urbana' by Paul M. Angle, February 1942
- Folder 16: Isaac Kuhn reaches 80 Mark, *News-Gazette*, 1946
- Folder 17: Isaac Kuhn speeches, June 26, 1950 and undated
- Folder 18: 'Isaac Kuhn doesn't like ruts,' newspaper article, 1951
- Folder 19: Isaac Kuhn Marks 85<sup>th</sup> Birthday, newspaper article, 1951
- Folder 20: Kuhn Cubs – Little League Champs, *News-Gazette*, June 1951
- Folder 21: Isaac Kuhn recalls early days, newspaper article, 1954
- Folder 22: Isaac Kuhn obituaries, 1955
- Folder 23: Joseph Kuhn & Co. 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (1865-1955), *Courier*, February 13, 1955 [special advertising section (16 pages) contains history of the company.]
- Folder 24: Isaac Kuhn tribute, *Illinois Men's Apparel Club News*, May 26, 1955
- Folder 25: Memo proposing sale of 31 and 37-39 Main Street, Champaign, 1956
- Folder 26: Joseph Kuhn and Co. celebrates 93 years, *Courier*, February 23, 1958
- Folder 27: Joseph Kuhn & Co. 100 years sweepstakes cash, 1965
- Folder 28: Joseph Kuhn & Co. celebrates 100 years, *Courier*, March 21, 1965
- Folder 29: Joseph Kuhn & Co. celebrates 100 years, *News-Gazette*, March 30, 1965
- Folder 30: Joseph Kuhn & Co. marks 115<sup>th</sup> year, *News-Gazette*, October 12, 1980
- Folder 31: 1903 Energy Crisis, *The Leader*, January 6, 1983
- Folder 32: Joseph Kuhn & Co. Histories, 1985, 1999, and 2015
- Folder 33: Joseph Kuhn & Co. advisement, *Champaign-Urbana Octopus*, September 21-27, 2001
- Folder 34: City Ready for Negotiations on Two Parking Lot Newspaper Article, undated
- Folder 35: The History of 309 W. University, Champaign, IL (Joseph Kuhn), undated
- Folder 36: Joseph Kuhn & Co. Hotel proposal, undated
- Folder 37: Kuhn Photographs (photocopies), undated
- Folder 38: Parking lot historic site: letter to the editor by C.C. Burford, undated