

# Moses Kahn left Bloomington a legacy of good works

The death of Moses Kahn was expected, but that did not make it any easier for the community. He had arrived in Bloomington in 1866, and his affection for the city was reciprocated, to say the least.

Born in France in 1850, he came to the United States when he was still a teen. After attending Indiana University for a year, he went to work for his uncle, Isaac Kahn, a Bloomington clothing merchant. In the years that followed, Moses Kahn served his apprenticeship until he reached the point of going into business for himself. He had partnerships with Levi Tannenbaum and Alex Hirsch.

Turn of the century obituaries tended to be flowery, praising even the most amoral of individuals, but Moses Kahn's obituary in the July 12, 1920, edition of the *Bloomington Evening World* was absolutely sincere and truthful. What better tribute to a human being than the one in the front page article? "When we think of Mr. Kahn in the years to come, and we must need think of him very often, it will



## LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

be of a friend who was kindly in thought, tolerant in speech and generous in impulse and deed — of one whose heart went out in warmest sympathy to the weak, the defenseless and the suffering, of one who gave as freely of himself (and this is always much the larger gift) as he did of his means to relieve the unfortunate."

Articles in newspapers during his time in Bloomington attest to his enthusiastic participation in the worthy causes of the community. Continued the obituary, "He was actively identified with our local charities. No worthy philanthropy ever appealed to him in vain for aid."

The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks conducted a brief funeral service at the Kahn home, and then his body was taken to Evansville for another funeral. (His daughter, Mrs. Isadore Kahn, lived there.)

Kahn had found friends in all walks of life in Bloomington and was deeply mourned by anyone who had ever come into contact with him, either in business or socially. As the *Evening World* put it, "His memory will be cherished as tenderly and lovingly in many humble homes as in the homes of his multitudinous friends. He was affectionate, persistent, progressive, sagacious and fertile in resource."

There was no question about Kahn's business sense. Continued the newspaper, "He might be temporarily baffled, but he was seldom ultimately beaten. He knew intuitively what many acquired laboriously. He had that uncommon common sense which enabled him to see the weakness and the strength of a business proposition."

He was a leader among leaders of the community. "By the charm of his personality and the sincerity of his character he drew strong men unto him, and numbered among his intimate friends our most representative citizens, leaders in thought and endeavor."

Kahn, who was the first and only president of the Bloomington Charity Association, was also a member of the Red Men and the Masons. He was survived by his wife, the former Celia Hirsch of Cincinnati, Ohio, and six children: Mrs. Fred Bryan of Minneapolis; Mrs. Kahn of Evansville; Mrs. George Morris of Chicago; Edgar Kahn of New York; Howard Kahn of St. Paul and Fred Kahn of Bloomington.

The store he founded was a fixture of downtown Bloomington for many years after his death. His obituary is a reminder that business and morality do not have to be strangers to each other.

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