Heymann's, Still Growing, Plans for City of 100,000

In 1916, the Kaiser's victorious legions were flooding over all of Europe. The eastern front had crumbled, and Russia was in the throes of a revolution.

Here in Lafayette, a revolution of a less violent nature was taking place—a new era of salesmanship and merchandising was beginning to unfold.

In 1916 Maurice Heymann, once in business with his brother, Leon, in New Orleans, opened the store that was to become the area's largest; one that within twenty years would include one of the largest foodmarkets in the state.

Working on the theory that for a product to be bought, it must first be sold, Heymann initiated radical changes in area salesmanship. Cash, instead of credit buying was instituted. Prices were fixed—if a product sold for two dollars, it sold for that. There was no bargaining—just bargains.

In fact, Heymann called his store “The Bargain Store” and the motto, “Watch Us Grow” was fulfilled because the merchandise lived up to the store's name.

Faith in City Proven

Heymann had great faith in Lafayette as a growing city, and he planned his business accordingly. After constant expansion, Heymann's moved to its present location in 1925, and opened a branch in Crowley. A staunch advocate of advertising, Heymann's set up a full-time publicity and ad department. A printing plant, complete with experienced personnel, was established to take care of store printing. In 1930, another branch was opened in Opelousas.

During the depression, Heymann's played an even more important part in the area's everyday life. During the 1933 bank holiday and moratorium, the Lafayette store cashed customers' checks on faith. Ninety per cent of a check was given to the customer in cash—ten per cent in a paper script, issued by Heymann and good for purchases made in the store. As days passed and the banks remained closed, the Heymann script came close to becoming legal tender.

The food center, established in 1937, was met with jeers from a few and cheers from many. Designed for a city of 25,000 it was, at the time, the state's largest. Today, however, plans for another, larger food center are on the drawing board.

Heymann's maintains a full-time New York office with four employees who buy exclusively for the Lafayette store. Heymann's is home-owned, and operated. Profits are re-invested into the community, and in expansion of present facilities. Over a half-million dollars rest in a fund slated for store modernization. Within the last five years, a modern heating and air conditioning unit has been installed in the store.

Heymann's plans for a new, more modern store should be fulfilled by 1951. It will be built for a city of 100,000 population. Heymann's store motto is still coming true—the store is still growing.

But with plans for the future, the past remains ever-present at the big but friendly store on Jefferson st. Seven employees have been with Maurice Heymann since the store's founding. Eight have been employed for 28 years, 20 for 18 years, and another 20 for 13 years.