

Meny's Incorporated

Founded: 1881

Location: Corner of Haub and Race Streets, Haubstadt (1881–1985); 760 Highway 68 East (1985– )

August Michael Schultheis, the son of Bavarian immigrants, founded a general store in Haubstadt around 1881. The nineteen-year-old entrepreneur chose a building on the corner of Haub and Race Streets for his venture—a good choice and one that served the business for more than a century. In 1891 he married Mary Anna Reitz of Evansville. Their daughter, Emma “Lorene,” later married Victor J. Meny, the second owner of the concern, whose name still adorns the firm.

Schultheis's philosophy was to “anticipate and stock those items area customers might need and have a ready source from which to obtain what has not been stocked.” A turn of the twentieth century advertisement bears out the fact that he lived by his motto, promising patrons tinware, hardware, glassware, Queensware, woodenware, tobacco, wallpaper, cutlery, dry goods, footwear, and groceries. Most goods came in bulk. Schultheis or an assistant would have to measure out just the right amount of beans, sugar, or flour for a customer and package it themselves. If someone wanted eggs they could go to the store, but they had better bring their egg basket.

Beyond the staples provided by most general stores in rural areas in the early twentieth century, Schultheis shipped a large number of furs, including muskrat, raccoon, fox, opossum, beaver, mink, and rabbit to the larger cities in the area using the interurban line. He also used the interurban to ship a large amount of farm produce, namely butter, eggs, potatoes, and live poultry to markets in Evansville. George Ziliak, an undertaker in the area, sometimes helped Schultheis pack the butter in large barrels.

When Schultheis died on Christmas Eve in 1935 the business was sold at public auction to Victor J. Meny in partnership with Oscar G. Schultheis, August and Mary's third son. The name "Schultheis" remained the designation for the business, and August's philosophy continued to guide the operation. Meny owned other businesses in the area, including a lumber company and an automobile repair garage. In 1937 Meny added a propane section to the store. Four years after buying the business, Meny sold his other enterprises to concentrate on the general store. He continued to offer new products to customers. In the mid-1930s the company began selling gas kitchen stoves, the first one purchased by Meny, Oscar Schultheis, and Jake Pfeiffer. Fresh meat began appearing on store shelves in 1951.

After Meny became the full owner of the business in 1953 the name was changed to Meny's Store, Inc., but he retained Schultheis's philosophy of providing whatever people needed. The stockholders of the new firm included Victor, Lorene, and their children. In 1954 the propane and appliance business was separated from the general store, and a second company was formed. By the mid-1950s Meny's was doing more than selling groceries and hardware, it also engaged in television and radio repair work. At the end of the decade the firm had purchased a die-and-cutter set for pipe cutting. All twelve of the Meny's children had a hand, at one time or another, in the two ventures.

Growth continued in the 1960s for the Haubstadt store. In 1961 the firm's board of directors approved the purchase of a dairy case to store perishable goods. Two years later Meny installed air conditioning in the building and bought new machinery for the meat department. In 1967 the company became allied with Cotter & Company, an association of independent hardware businesses that pool their purchases in order to buy

in bulk to save money. In 1997 Cotter & Company merged with Service Star, forming the TruServ Company.

Five of Meny's children—Mary, Kenneth, Wilma, Gerald, and Eugene—purchased their siblings' shares in the business in 1983. Gerald was elected president of the firm, a post he held until 1988. The family decided to relocate the store and enlarge its facilities, moving the business in 1985 to State Road 68. The new building came equipped with a modern bakery and deli. New services added in the 1980s included a pharmacy and a liquor department. In the 1990s the company expanded by opening a hardware store in Jasper, Indiana, under the name Meny's True Value, and two appliance businesses, one in Princeton and another in Mount Carmel, Illinois.

In 1999 Meny's Shopping Plaza sold groceries, dry goods, hardware, appliances, and propane. In addition they also offered a pharmacy, a deli, repair for the goods they sold, photo development, and dry cleaning services. Jeffrey A. Meny, a fourth generation of the family and the son of Kenneth Meny, served as the president of the firm in 1999. He was joined in the business by twelve of his siblings and cousins and two members of the fifth generation of the family.