



*Hardware Dealer's Magazine, October, 1922*  
**"THE WINCHESTER-SIMMONS MERGER"**  
*from W.A. Denny, Denny & Jones*  
*New Hampton, Missouri*

**WILL THEY MAKE IT BENEFICIAL?**

Submitted by Dave Heckel

From the Archives of  
The Winchester \* Keen Kutter\* Diamond Edge Chronicles  
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"The Winchester-Simmons Merger has, I guess, caused more talk in hardware circles than anything else that has happened for a good many years. The retail hardware dealer has to be pretty wide-awake to dig out of all the talk that is going around that which is unbiased and based upon common sense and a real interest in the welfare of the trade, and separate it from the prejudiced arguments which are mainly intended to influence him to do something that is to the interest of somebody else to have him do, rather than something that is really in his own interest.

There has been a good deal of effort made to lead us to think that the Simmons people have gone back on their own policies in hooking up with Winchester, but it seems to me that what has been done does away with the objections offered by Simmons to The Winchester Plan, which were chiefly that the Winchester proposition as it was at first worked out, not only did not give any better jobbing facilities to the retail merchant, but was designed to have him get along without the services of the jobber, and we all know that practically everybody who has tried that on in the hardware line has met with disaster.

it has been interesting to me to hear all the stories that have been invented--some to make it appear that this plan is going to revolutionize the whole hardware business of the country, and others that would lead you to think that it is going to result in the greatest possible damage to the business of the retailer. I do not take any stock in either of those extreme ideas.

I can see how it is going to be possible to put together the big manufacturing capacity of the Winchester factory and the big distribution capacity of the Simmons houses, in such a way as to cut out some of the items of cost in the present system of getting goods into the hands of the retail merchant, and it will of course, be very interesting to every one of us to see how successfully they work out those possibilities for our benefit and also whether they are going to put us in position to pass along some of those benefits to our customers, the general public.

Those of us who are handling Keen Kutter goods are, of course, being told every day a new reason why we should drop them and why they are going to be unprofitable for us to handle; or are going to be taken away from us, and why for some reason or another we ought to drop out the Keen Kutter; but the more talk of that kind I hear, the more I am disposed to believe that they are afraid something will develop in the near future to show the strength of this Winchester-Simmons combination, and the advantage of it to those of us who have been handling the Winchester tools or the Keen Kutter tools and show it so plainly that there will be no chance after that of getting us switched off, as they seem to be in such a hurry to have us do.

The whole thing seems to me to narrow down to the simple question as to whether the Winchester-Simmons combination are really going to try to make their organization beneficial to the Retail Merchants with whom they do business. It seems to me plain that they can make it so if they want to, and I do not know any reason to believe that they are not going to be smart enough to do it if they can.

I think, therefore, that I am pretty much like the majority of the retail merchants in the country who are not allowing themselves to be run off their feet in either direction, who are not being frightened by the ghost stories that are being told them by one part of the salesmen who call on us, nor are we "counting our chickens before they are hatched" because of the rainbow pictures that are being painted for us by the others.

We are just sitting tight, keeping our heads, and going on and doing business just as we have been doing it, but we have our eyes wide open and our ears wide open.

We are not cutting off any desirable connections that are already established, nor are we going to depend upon them too much for the future until we see

more clearly and in a more practical way just how the thing is going to work out in actual experience as well theory.

The theory sounds all right and the people who are working it have shown themselves very competent, so that there is no reason to doubt that they can and will do what anybody else could do with the same facilities, but as no other factory organization seems to have anything like the plant facilities that the Winchester people have, and as no other jobbers have distributing facilities equal to the Simmons organization, the chances appear to be in favor of the dealers who play along with this combination, and I expect to do that at least until the thing looks differently to me that it does now."

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*\*Editor's Comment: From this article and others, it seems unquestionably true that the combination of Winchester's manufacturing capacity and Simmons distribution capacity (enhanced by the proven quality of the Keen Kutter line and the Winchester trademark) created an unbeatable formula for success. Why then did it fail so quickly and so disastrously for both companies? Any theories or documentation that could give some insight on what happened and why would be appreciated.*

Evidently Mr. Denny operated a Keen Kutter store in New Hampton, MO. Has any one got one of these?"

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• THCKK is a not-for-profit organization formed in March of 1996. It serves to distribute information and provide an interactive forum about vintage hardware companies such as E.C. Simmons, (Keen Kutter), A.F. Shapleigh (Diamond Edge) and The Winchester Store (and the popular collectibles bearing their logos and associated house brands) as well as other historically interesting hardware companies such as "Our Very Best" (Hibbard, Spencer & Bartlett), Blue Grass (Belknap Hardware), Stanley, etc. are included as interest dictates (Witte, Wyeth, Lee, Sargent, etc)

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