

Stranger shoes

Tuesday, August 13, 2019 by Ishleen G Singh

The new season of *Stranger Things* is out and it contains a snippet that links to our very own Special Collections & Archives department. The new season is about a newly opened Starcourt Mall which has become the focal point of the town causing other stores to be run out of business. While everyone is at the mall, there are power fluctuations that trigger Will's (the main character's) awareness of something not so good. Although, in the previous season, the characters close up the portal to the Upside Down (a parallel universe), there is still some sort of danger swarming around.

One of the teens in the show comes into contact with a Russian code, which leads to him and his two friends attempting to decipher the message. They figure out the translation and the message is:

The week is long. The silver cat feeds when blue meets yellow in the west. A trip to China sounds nice if you tread lightly.

The group of friends figure out that the code correlates to places in the mall and the phrase "tread lightly" refers to a shoe store called Kaufman Shoes. Kaufman Shoes connects to Kaufman Footwear Inc., a brand which originated in Kitchener and now it is being featured in one of the most popular television shows.



GA148: File 735: Image of a display booth of Kaufman Shoes at a trade fair.

Kaufman Footwear Ltd. was created by Alvin R. Kaufman who was born to Jacob and Mary Kaufman in Berlin (now known as Kitchener), Ontario on February 11, 1885. At the age of 22, with the aid of his father, A.R. Kaufman formed the Kaufman Rubber Company Limited in 1907. The company became the Kaufman Footwear Inc. under the supervision of William H. Kaufman, the son of A.R. Kaufman.

Kaufman Footwear is a huge part of the history of Kitchener-Waterloo. When the Kaufman Rubber Co. opened in 1907, there were 350 employees that helped in producing rubber footwear for domestic and foreign markets. Over the years, the types of products being produced expanded and the company began to manufacture footwear, slippers, waterproof shoes and leather work boots. Out of the Kaufman Footwear Ltd. came Sorel Boots, one of the most successful products to date. In Canada, you can spot many people wearing Sorels in winter as they keep the toes warm and dry!



GA148: File 741: Sorel boot with a rabbit inside of it (how cute!)

Over the years, the Kaufmans became major philanthropists in the KW region. They supported many services such as the Children's Aid Society, the Kitchener-Waterloo Orphanage, the Women's Christian Temperance Union,

the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and the Kitchener-Waterloo Hospital. A.R. received citations for his public service including: Kitchener Citizen of the Year, 1965; Honorary Doctor of Humanics from Springfield, 1954; Honorary Member of the Kitchener-Waterloo Rotary Club.



GA171: File 32B: Image of Lester B. Pearson, the Prime Minister at the time, trying on a pair of Kaufman Rubber boots.

It is interesting to see a Canadian company appear on an American television show. Especially regarding the Kaufmans, a family who has provided great service to the Kitchener-Waterloo area.

To learn more about the Kaufmans please check out the Special Collections & Archives Department on the first floor of the Dana Porter Library. [See our AtoM site for file listings and more information.](#)



GA148: File 128: A mural done by artist Monte Wright in Kitchener Downtown. Kaufman Footwear was involved in the Kitchener Downtown Mural Programme.