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Montgomery Ward and Company catalog collection

Title: Montgomery Ward and Company catalog collection
Collection No: MSS.489
Extent: 6 cubic feet
Inclusive Dates: 1920-1968

Abstract: The collection contains mail-order catalogs issued by Montgomery Ward and Company between 1920 and 1968.

Donor: Memphis College of Art, June 1999.
Processed by: Chris Ratliff and Gerald Chaudron, February 2016.
Access: Open to all researchers.
Language: English
Preferred Citation: Montgomery Ward and Company catalog collection, Preservation and Special Collections Department, University Libraries, University of Memphis.

Publication date: February 2016

Administrative information

Montgomery Ward and Company was founded in Chicago by Aaron Montgomery Ward (1844-1913) in 1872 in response to what he saw as the plight of many Midwest Americans whom he considered were overcharged and underserved by small town retailers. By heavy use of the railroads centered on Chicago, and by associating his business with the non-profit Patrons of Husbandry (the Grangers), Ward offered rural customers a far larger stock than generally available in their towns and at a lower price. His free catalog, printed by the most modern methods, was widely mailed to customers, allowing them to see pictures of consumer goods and imagine how they might be used. Later, Ward used the Post Office's Rural Free Delivery service; he lobbied for a parcel post system that came about in 1906. The early 20th century was the heyday of mail orders and Ward's became an American tradition.

The company opened its first retail store in 1926 but after operating successfully into the 1940s, Montgomery Ward did not respond to the increasing suburbanization following the war and lost customers to other retailers such as Sears and JC Penney. In 1985 the company closed its catalog business and shut down its retail operation in 2000.

Scope and contents

The collection consists of 41 copies of Montgomery Ward and Company mail-order catalogs from 1920 to 1968, the majority of which are from the 1920s to the 1940s.

Subject terms

Commercial catalogs--United States.
Montgomery Ward.

Inventory

Box 1

- No. 92, 1920.
- No. 94, Portland, OR, 1921.
- No. 97, Fort Worth, TX, 1922-1923 Fall/Winter.
- No. 98, Saint Paul, MN, 1923 Spring/Summer.
- No. 100, Kansas City, MO, 1924 Spring/Summer.
- No. 101, Fort Worth, TX, 1924-1925 Fall/Winter.
- No. 102, Fort Worth, TX, 1925 Spring/Summer.
- No. 103, Chicago, ILL, 1925-1926 Fall and Winter.

Box 2

No. 104, Baltimore, MD, 1926 Spring and Summer.
No. 105, Fort Worth, TX, 1926-1927 Fall and Winter.
No. 106, Oakland, CA, 1927 Spring and Summer.
No. 107, Kansas City, MO, 1927-1928 Fall/Winter.
No. 108, Oakland CA, 1928 Spring/Summer.
No. 109, Chicago, ILL, 1928-1929 Fall/Winter.
No. 110, Denver, CO, 1929 Spring/Summer.
No. 111, Kansas City MO, 1929-1930 Fall/Winter.

Box 3

Special Edition, Kansas City, MO, 1932.
No. 112, Fort Worth, TX, 1930 Spring/Summer.
No. 113, Chicago, ILL, 1930-1931 Fall/Winter.
No. 114, Fort Worth, TX, 1931 Spring/Summer.
No. 125, Jacksonville-Baltimore, 1936-1937 Fall/Winter.
No. 126, Fort Worth, TX, 1937 Spring/Summer.
No. 127, Chicago, ILL, 1937-1938 Fall/Winter.
No. 131, Chicago, ILL, 1939-1940 Fall/Winter.
No. 136, Kansas City, MO, 1942 Spring/Summer.

Box 4

No. 137, Fort Worth, TX, 1942-1943 Fall/Winter.
No. 138, Oakland, CA, 1943 Spring/Summer.
No. 139, Kansas City, MO, 1943-1944 Fall/Winter.
Denver, CO, 1944 Spring/Summer.
Denver, CO. 1944-1945 Fall/Winter.
Denver, CO, 1947 Spring/Summer.

Box 5

Denver, CO, 1947-1948 Fall/Winter.
St. Paul, MN, 1950 Spring/Summer.
St. Paul, MN, 1951 Spring/Summer.
Kansas City, MO, 1952 Spring/Summer.
Denver, CO, 1952-1953 Fall/Winter.
Fort Worth, TX, 1953 Spring/Summer.

Box 6

1965 Spring/Summer.
1966 Spring/Summer.
1967 Spring/Summer.
1968 Fall/Winter.