

The fall of an icon

Posted by [Martin Fairclough](#) On 10/15/2018

Leonardtown, MD - From a printed mailer in 1888 to the final publication in 1993, the Sears Catalog grew into an important record of what life was like through the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Beginning with mail order goods the company followed the railroad in America's westward expansion and quickly became a national institution providing a wide variety of goods. .

Do you know what your great grandparents would have worn? What would they have wanted for Christmas? Get an idea by looking at the Sears Catalog through the years. The original 1888 mailer carrying watches and jewelry expanded into a catalog in 1894 that kept growing, offering an ever-widening range of products: sewing machines, sporting goods, musical instruments, saddles, firearms, buggies, bicycles, baby carriages, and clothing. In the late 1800s the catalog began carrying Christmas holiday items leading to its eventual status as the "Wish Book."

Other interesting facts about the Sears and Roebuck Catalog include some of the people who were involved in the making of it. Big name 40s and 50s film stars Lauren Bacall and Susan Hayward model fashions in pages of the catalog. Also featured are Ted Williams, a major baseball player in the 40s, Al Unser, a race car driver, and Gene Autry, "The Singing Cowboy." Music history in America also credits Sears catalog with changing American life style because of the inexpensive but quality musical instruments offered through mail order and its subsequent expansion into bricks and mortar stores

Today Amazon seems to carry that mantle with a disruptive twist. Amazon started in the early 1990's using the internet as its catalog. No stage coaches needed to deliver with an ever expanding inventory rivaling that of Sears and Roebuck in its heyday. What can stop this new behemoth of retail- maybe Jeff Bezos' master plan is to imitate the growth experienced like Sears by expanding its platform to bricks and mortar is a good blueprint. Only this time with a different outcome. The price for a share of Sears today is about .23 cents and heading into bankruptcy - One share of Amazon about \$1750

On Feb.5,1996, Business week announced to the world that Apple Inc was finished. THE FALL OF AN ICON headlined the cover that week. Sometime recently Apple became the first company to reach a market cap of \$1 billion.

There surely could be no expectation that Sears will follow the Apple story, but for this correspondent who bought his first shotgun along with a nice suit from a Sears store in the northwest en route to Alaska the demise of Sears is like losing a piece of America.

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