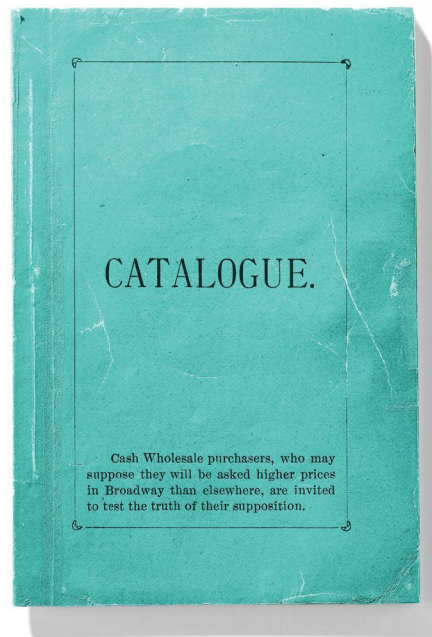
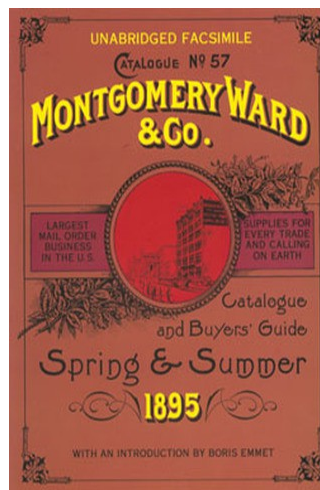


The first mail order catalog was published in 1845 by Tiffany's called Blue Book.



The first catalog of Tiffany's jewelry, 1845
Tiffany blue; robin's egg color as it called became the brand's iconic color for many decades

The first Montgomery Ward catalog was produced on August 18, 1872. The company was based in Chicago. And while many businesses were already publishing mail order catalogs, it was Aaron Montgomery Ward that is credited for producing the first mail order catalog meant for the general public. By 1904, 3,000,000 customers were on the catalog mailing list.



Besides allowing rural households access to affordable goods (well over half of the population lived in rural America when Montgomery Ward launched the first catalog), **mail-order shopping increased women's power as a consumer**, a dynamic that exists in homes to this day. The successful companies were industrial and commercial miracles of their time. During those times the mail didn't run in few days; people patiently waited for their goods to arrive for weeks and sometimes for months.

It was far from an overnight success. Ward dealt with failed business partner relationships, strong opposition from store owners, and enormous difficulties shipping items. But it was a sound plan with a huge target audience. To help put the minds of the sometimes skeptical public at ease, he was an early adopter of the “money-back guarantee” he was an that the catalogs of the time would become so known for. By 1883 one page and 163 items had turned into 200 pages with over 10,000 items. Montgomery Ward was at the top of the food chain, but another enterprising man was about to amp up the competition. <https://recollections.biz/blog/the-early-history-of-mail-order-catalogs/>

Sears

Sears became one of the big retail houses in the 1880's. Richard Sears started as a worker on the railroads from where he moved to sell watches. Sears sold watches up and down the railroad line, learning as he went. He began using flyers to advertise and is said to have been a copywriting genius from the beginning. With suitcases full of cash, he made his own way to Chicago in 1887 with his sights set on expansion. In the beginning Sears, Roebuck and Company sold only watches through their catalogs but in no time they'd expanded on selling variety of goods.

The company made its name with its swollen, jam-packed catalogs that advertised everything from underwear to entire house kits. Around the holidays, families across the country would circle items in its legendary “Wish Book.” <https://www.history.com/news/sears-catalog-houses-hubcaps>



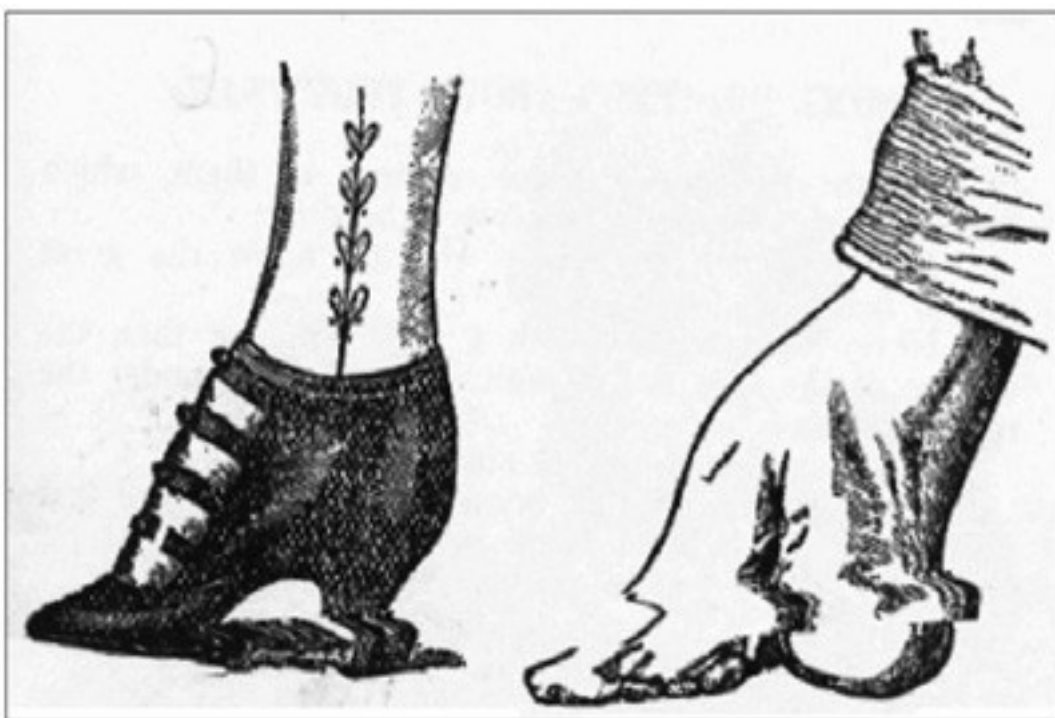
Ladies Wrapper

Mail order catalog **illustrates how luxuries that would only belong to wealthy city dwellers were now available by mail order to those all around the country.** The tremendous variety of goods available for sale required businesses to compete for customers in ways they had never before imagined.

As not everyone lived in big cities offered customers convenience because customer purchases no longer had to be deferred for the next trip to a town. Dressing well and following fashion meant a great deal to many women. To find reasonably priced stylish clothing, Canadian women increasingly turned to mail-order catalogues that did not disappoint. Catalogue shoppers could buy their clothing ready-made or send in their measurements for made-to-order tailored suits.

A strong clothing department for women was a necessity for both department stores and mail-order catalogues, since the ability to provide fashionable women's dress reflected well on the quality and novelty of the other departments.

Some catalogs like Eaton's spread information on unhealthy fashion items to boot up the sales of their own products. Medical conditions attributed to wearing fashionable dress included abnormal menstruation, miscarriage, breast tumours, weakened abdominal muscles, abnormally shaped livers, feet, and spines, cracked ribs, shortness of breath, an irregular heartbeat, tuberculosis and anaemia.



The effects of wearing tight-fitting shoes as depicted by Dr. B. G. Jefferis and J. L. Nichols in *The Household Guide or Domestic Cyclopedia* (Toronto: J. L. Nichols Company Limited, 1894), p.291. This almanac was sold through the Eaton's catalogue.

However the role of department store catalogues and mail-order service in the promotion of dress reform was complex. Since girls and women constituted the entire market for corsets and fancy dress, dress reformers' opposition to fashionable dress was considered an obstacle to sales. Mail-order companies acknowledged the clothing debate, as the following catalogue advertisement indicates: "The doctors claim the corset as their best friend; but in spite of doctors and dress reformers, a new corset makes its appearance every little while. And the women buy them of course they do."

Corset manufacturers recognized the changing attitudes towards health and fitness, and developed alternative products for this segment of the market. Some companies included physicians' testimonies that properly fitted corsets could be "health preserving," as was the case for Ball's corsets advertised in the Eaton's catalogue and medical journals. "Healthy corsets" were made using new techniques such as steam moulding to replace rigid whalebone stays, and by using coraline, an elasticized cotton fabric that increased flexibility.

<https://www.historymuseum.ca/cmhc/exhibitions/cpm/catalog/cat2203e.html#1222163>



One of the clothing items that became popular through mail order catalog was wollen underwear and stockings. One of the most prominent physicians to enter the dress reform market was the German doctor, Gustave Jaeger, who created his own medical woollen clothing system. He advocated wearing wool next to the skin, and outlined his theories and sanitary clothing system in his book *Health Culture*, first published in English in 1887.

By the late 1880s, however, Dr. Jaeger was selling his woollen reform clothing through selected retailers worldwide including Eaton's. In 1888, one year after Dr. Jaeger's book *Health Culture* was published and made available in Canada, his clothes were introduced to Eaton's and Simpson's

catalogue readers. Throughout the last two decades of the 19th century, there was a marked increase in the number of natural wool items available in mail-order catalogues.

Quote from the story called "Our Spare Room" from 1880: "It would be horrible", she went on. "I should feel that the next thing would be I should have to wear divided skirts and stockings with toes to them." "I thought stockings always had toes", I said, but Margaret vouchsafed me no reply, not condescending to inform me that she referred to Dr. Jaeger's new system, where the toes of the stockings are separated like the fingers in a glove." <https://www.flyingwithhands.com/2019/10/did-you-put-on-your-jaegers-henry.html>

other link to underwear history: https://books.google.fi/books?id=UdP_sSKIxf0C&pg=PA424&lpg=PA424&dq=jaeger+1880+wool+underwear&source=bl&ots



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258. Warm-weight long-sleeved vest and pants, in pure wool. White with blue tipping. Also in short-sleeved vest, 11/4 each.

259. Pure wool light-weight vest and trunk drawers. Also in long-sleeved vest and pants, 8/11 each. Other qualities: K. Light-weight 15/8 each. KK. Medium-weight, 17/8 each.

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