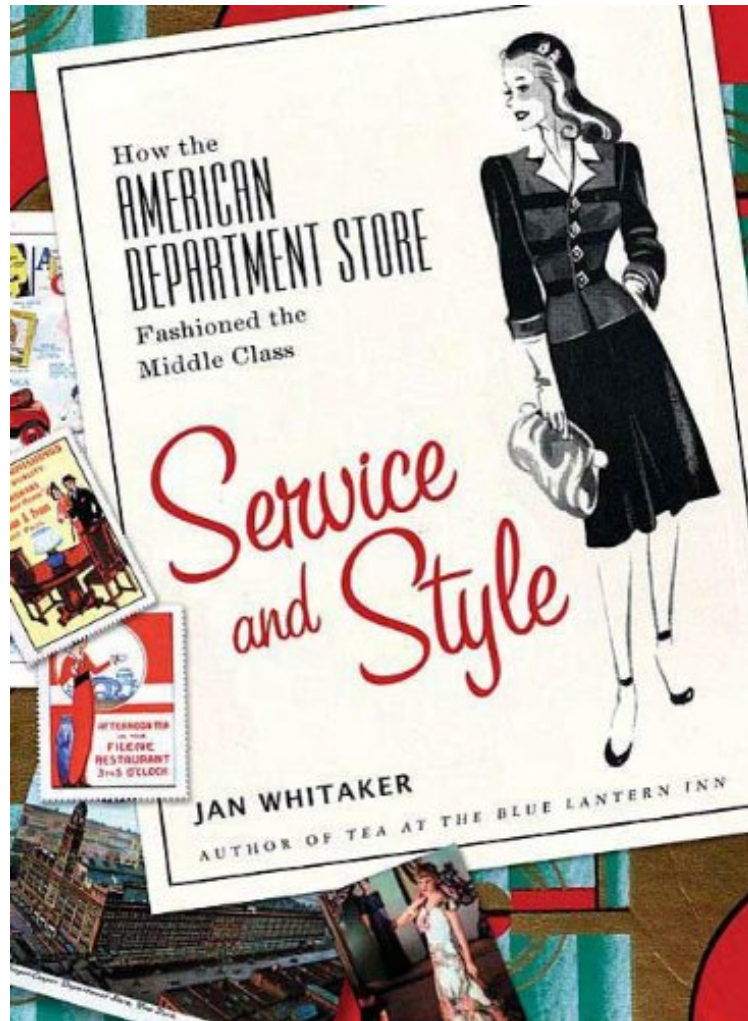


Service and Style: How the American Department Store Fashioned the Middle Class

Jan Whitaker

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Jan Whitaker : Service and Style: How the American Department Store Fashioned the Middle Class before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Service and Style: How the American Department Store Fashioned the Middle Class:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Shopping as a cultural influence - who knew??? By Ann R. Crowell Great resource for information on the rise of the department stores and their influence on our culture, Many of the names are very familiar and some of them were gone before the 20th century began... Many people were not enticed by the "one stop shopping" concept. Many were appalled to find their neighborhood stores "run out of business" by these department stores much like today when people see the box stores taking over their favorite places to shop. What began as "bargain sales every day of the week" organizations developed into the Neimans, Saks, Macy's,

etc of today! While some establishments eschewed even the phrase "department store" in their names they still followed the lead of the department store pioneers. Competition bred innovation and expansion! Expansion uncontrolled spelled disaster for many "old school" stores whose names are but memories. The buying and selling of the stores and their famous names had little impact on the buying habits of their clientele. Of course, the wars had monumental effects on the way people shopped and did not shop. I had never thought about the influence stores have had on our lives as Americans because the department store is a more American concept than I realized - save for perhaps Harrods in England. A friend suggested this book to me while she was still reading it and I have found it hard to put down. 6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Everything you ever wanted to know about DEPARTMENT STORES: Late 1800's to 1980's By Angie2 This book is about the history of the American Department Store, from the late 1800's to the early 1980's. The author of this book is emphatic about the fact that Department Stores are quite different from the "Catalog Stores" (eg: SEARS), or different from the huge "National Chain Stores" (eg: WAL-MART). So please note that this book is only about "Department Stores" (as stated in the book's title) and NOT about Chain Stores, nor the very huge National Catalog Chains. Anyhow, this book is very well-written. The photos are mostly in black-and-white, since at that time, most photos were not in color. The author does a wonderful job at categorizing each chapter into sub-categories, and the author goes into great detail in explaining the issues and experiences that affected the American Department stores (be it, their evolution, but also their demise). 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I've always loved old fashioned department stores By Randall Reade I've always loved old fashioned department stores. The author clearly knows what she is talking about, and the history is comprehensive and full. My only quibble is that she could have written a bit more about the economic forces in late 19th century American cities that fostered the growth of these types of stores, and the impact they had on the cities, and the impact growing cities had on the stores.

Downtown department stores were once the heart and soul of America's pulsing Broadways and Main Streets. With names such as City of Paris, Penn Traffic, The Maze, Maison Blanche, or The Popular, they suggested spheres far beyond mundane shopping. Nicknames reflected the affection customers felt for their favorites, whether Woodie's, Wanny's, Stek's, O.T.'s, Herp's, or Bam's. The history of downtown department stores is as fascinating as their names and as diverse as their merchandise. Their stories encompass many themes: the rise of decorative design, new career paths for women, the growth of consumerism, and the technological ingenuity of escalators and pneumatic tubes. Just as the big stores made up their own small universes, their stories are microcosmic narratives of American culture and society. The big stores were much more than mere businesses. They were local institutions where shoppers could listen to concerts, see fashion shows and art exhibits, learn golf or bridge, pay electric bills, and plan vacations; all while their children played in the store's nursery under the eye of a uniformed nursemaid. From Boston to San Diego and Miami to Seattle, department stores symbolized a city's spirit, wealth, and progressiveness. Situated at busy intersections, they occupied the largest and finest downtown buildings, and their massive corner clocks became popular meeting places. Their locations became the epicenters of commerce, the high point from which downtown property taxes were calculated. Spanning the late 19th century well into the 20th, their peak development mirrors the growth of cities and of industrial America when both were robust and flourishing. The time may be gone when children accompany their mothers downtown for a day of shopping and lunch in the tea room, when monogrammed trucks deliver purchases for free the very same day, and when the personality of a city or town can be read in its big stores. But they are far from forgotten and they still have power to influence how we shop today. Service and Style recreates the days of downtown department stores in their prime, from the 1890s through the 1960s. Exploring in detail the wide range of merchandise they sold, particularly style goods such as clothing and home furnishings, it examines how they displayed, promoted, and sometimes produced goods. It reveals how the stores grew, why they declined, and how they responded to and shaped the society around them.

From Publishers Weekly The American department store is "not quite a dinosaur," says Whitaker (Tea at the Blue Lantern Inn), but it has certainly seen better days, and it's that robust era; from the turn of the 20th century to the 1960s; that she chooses to celebrate in this lively pop history. At their peak, department stores were the nation's largest booksellers and many major chains also sold groceries. But it was clothes that made the stores a prime destination for women of all social classes, and Whitaker discusses at significant length the subtle movements through which major chains from one end of the country to the other cultivated their reputations for being up-to-date with the latest Paris fashions, then tapped into additional markets for young adult and children's wear. More than 100 photographs and illustrations are integrated into the text, aptly demonstrating the lengths to which stores went in order to present themselves as elegant yet modern and convenient. Legendary New York chains like Macy's and Gimbel's get much of the attention, but outposts from other regions, such as San Francisco's Emporium or Philadelphia's Lit Brothers, also get due notice, adding an additional aura of comprehensiveness to Whitaker's richly detailed account. 8-page color insert. (Aug.) Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From School Library Journal Adult/High School; This well-written book presents a thorough picture of

department stores from their beginnings in the late 19th century through their heyday. Readers are treated to all aspects of the stores' histories, from financing to marketing to merchandising; their employment of women, layout, display windows, and architecture; store competition; and, particularly, the move from home sewing to ladies' ready-to-wear. These independent establishments were instrumental in defining and catering to a rising middle class and an integral and hugely important part of urban centers. Then, around 1970, Sears and Penney's stores and discounters in suburbia made the going too rough. Now the big independents with the proud old names are hardly recognizable. The illustrations include photos of store exteriors and interiors and copies of ads. Chapters are broken up by topic. This is an invaluable resource for students of marketing, fashion design, and U.S. history/social studies. —Judy McAloon, Potomac Library, Prince William County, VA Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. About the Author Jan Whitaker is a writer and freelance editor based in Amherst, Massachusetts. She is the author of *Tea at the Blue Lantern Inn: A Social History of the Tea Room Craze in America*.