



MONTGOMERY WARD & CO.'S BUILDING AT THE TRANS-MISSISSIPPI EXPOSITION.

Montgomery Ward & Co. at the Exposition.

Their Building, Their Exhibit, the Magnitude of Their Business and the Story of Their Marvellous Growth.

One of the most beautiful buildings erected by private enterprise at the Exposition, and surpassing in beauty of architecture many of the state buildings, is that of Montgomery Ward & Co., the Great Mail Order House of Chicago. It is situated on the bluff tract east of Sherman avenue and commands one of the most beautiful sites on the grounds. Its dimensions are 41x64 feet. The height to the cornice is 23 feet, and the design is pure Greek of the noblest character from the period of the temple of Apollo at Bassae. The exterior is commanding and ornamental, exposing designs and finish chaste and beautiful. The interior is finished in white pine with ornamental trimmings, all done in a thoroughly artistic and appropriate manner. The cases in which goods are exhibited are of solid cherry, ten feet high, with great wide glass fronts through which the exhibit is seen in the most attractive manner.

Throughout this large room seats and settees of ease and comfort are scattered profusely, inviting the tired sight-seer to rest and enjoy that leisure which is proffered them. At the northeast corner of the building is a very cozy little office, handsomely carpeted and supplied with desk, sofa, chairs and stationery, where the visitor can have the comforts of home and write letters as often as desired. At the southeast corner a ladies' toilet room affords every convenience for those of the fair sex.

The building is occupied wholly by Montgomery Ward & Co., who have appropriated \$25,000.00 for its erection and the making of an exhibit of the goods they manufacture and sell for the further purpose of having a place where sight-seers can meet their friends, can rest and enjoy themselves, at the same time being pleasantly entertained, free of all expense, while they are in the building.

The reception room, with its ceiling nearly forty feet high, is draped and trimmed with flags and bunting of varied colors, notably those of our own nation so dearly beloved by us all. This immense room is lighted by incandescent electric lights, which give a delicate soft tinge to the entire room and its contents.

A reporter of the "Omaha Bee" recently called at this elegant building, and, first having enjoyed the grand view which is afforded from its broad steps, and having noted the many beautiful flowers that bordered the lawn, which Montgomery Ward & Co. so thoughtfully used in beautifying their Nebraska Summer Home, and having also noted the extreme pleasure enjoyed by those who occupied the settees which are in every shaded nook, stepped inside the building to see what it contained. There was evidently something of interest about to occur, for the easy chairs and settees, accommodating perhaps 200 people, were filled and the visitors were in a semi-expectant state, anticipating the entertainment which was soon to take place. The reporter frankly confessed that he was tired tramping throughout the Exposition and hailed with delight this opportunity to sit and rest himself, admiring the magnificent exhibit and listening to the music, which was played sweetly and softly, then with vehemence by the electrical attachment which controlled the piano on exhibition. The phonograph, too, did much to please everybody with concert songs, orations, melodies and witticisms which issued from its great brass funnel. Then suddenly the doors were closed, the lights turned out, and their attention was called to the fact that they were to be treated to a most interesting and wonderful description of the many views, and briefly told of the business of Montgomery Ward & Co. The reporter had heard much of this great mercantile house, and listened with wrapt attention to the telling of the growth of a business which is the greatest wonder of the mercantile world. When the lights were again turned on, he turned to a gentleman at his side and said: "What a wonderful business Montgomery Ward & Co. have built up." "Yes," replied he, "more wonderful than the mind can conceive; so wonderful that one fails to grasp it, and the

truth of the story is branded by the unfeigned as a lie, but it is no lie," continued he, "for Montgomery Ward & Co. do not lie about their business. It is as an open book to all the world, founded on that eternal principle of right between man and man and doing unto others even as they would that others would do unto them."

"You make your assertion with positiveness," said the reporter. "Yes," replied the gentleman, "with the positiveness of one who absolutely knows the truth of what he speaks." At this he handed a card to the reporter, which read: Advertising Manager for Montgomery Ward & Co., Chicago. Continuing, he said: "There has been so much said about Montgomery Ward & Co., and their methods of doing business, that I will afford me the greatest pleasure to answer any questions you may ask concerning them which you think will be of interest to the readers of the Bee." The reporter then asked the advertising manager if he would all the principle of the business—how it started, and the methods pursued to get and retain their customers. "Yes," replied he, "and in tracing the growth of Montgomery Ward & Co. from its beginning to the present time, you'll hear a story which is as fair as the gospel, but which seems like a fairy tale, and yet, it can be proven by the banks and commercial agencies of the world, and by fully 2,000,000 people who are our customers." "When and how did this business originate?" asked the reporter.

"In 1872, Mr. A. Montgomery Ward, at that time a traveling man, conceived the idea of selling goods direct to the people for cash. His capital was very limited then, and he associated with him a partner. They rented a room 18x20 feet and one boy was all the help they had, but they knew that when once the customer learned the advantages of buying for cash, always getting his goods fresh and of the latest styles, and learned that in making those purchases he could save from 15 per cent to 40 per cent on his purchases, that that man was sure to become a permanent customer. Our methods have proven successful because they appeal to the pocketbook of the consumer. He knows from experience that he can do better with us than with any concern on earth. He knows that we don't want to keep his money if he is dissatisfied, and he further knows that if he doesn't find goods as represented that he can have his money back on demand."

"How about your selling shoddy goods and fire damaged goods?" "That is an old story exploded years ago, for that claim was made against us then. We tell you that we never sell anything but the best of goods, and we will give \$5,000.00 to anyone who can find in our stock fire damaged goods or goods that can be characterized as shoddy."

"Your company has expended a large sum of money at this Exposition, have they not?" "Yes, \$25,000.00 has been appropriated for the purpose, and we will spend in addition to that whatever we consider necessary to properly represent our interests. When this Exposition matter first came up I was given full authority to come here, to select a site, and to build such a building as would enable us to properly entertain our visitors. That has been done, and will be done. Our intention is that every man, woman and child who visits this Exposition shall know who Montgomery Ward & Co. are, their business, and how they save money to the consumer when buying the things he eats, uses and wears." "Do you expect," inquired the reporter, "to build up a large trade in Omaha?" "No, we do not expect to build up a large trade, or a small trade, in Omaha or any other large city. We don't care for a dollar's worth of trade from anyone living in a large city. We don't sell residents of Chicago. We are only after the trade of country people and those who live in small towns. City people have large stocks to select from. They have their bargain days. We place our customers on the same footing, and give them the same stock of goods to select from, and our General Catalogue tells the prices. All days are bargain days with them when they order from us, and they can order at their leisure from our General Catalogue, which has over 800 pages, over 14,000 illustrations, and quotes wholesale prices to consumers on over 40,000 things used every day."

"Your mail must be enormous," suggested the reporter. "More than any other house in the world. There isn't a day passes that we receive less than 10,000 letters and orders, and they run as high as 25,000. Retail merchants are complaining of dull times. Don't you know why times are dull with them? It's because their prices are too high. If they would come down and ask right prices they would do business, but they can't meet our prices—no retailer can. We manufacture, we import, we buy in immense quantities, sell strictly for cash, have no poor accounts, no losses, and it is utterly impossible for them to compete with us. Now while they are complaining of dull times, let me tell you what we are doing. We are averaging 6,500 shipments a day of nine hours; that means 72 shipments an hour, or 12 shipments every working minute of the day. That's the way we're doing business. As a fact, we handle more express packages than all the combined express offices in the state of Colorado. We receive nearly twice as much money in postoffice orders as is received at the postoffice in Omaha. We sell more agricultural implements to farmers than are sold by all the small dealers in implements in Nebraska and South Dakota combined, and sell them in these states, too."

"I understand you have a very large trade in binder twine," said the reporter. "Well, as for that, you can best judge when I tell you that for this year and up to this date we have sold nearly 200 CAR LOADS. Figure 20,000 pounds to the car and you will see that we have already sold 4,000,000 pounds of binder twine, which represents the second or third largest output in this country. Such an enormous quantity of binder twine could not have been sold were it not for the excellence of our BLUE LABEL BRAND, which farmers from Maine to California and from British Columbia to Texas say is the best they ever used or saw. You perhaps think that every woman has a sewing machine. They haven't though, and although we have sold nearly 50,000, we are still selling 1,000 every month. Bicycles? A retailer who sells twenty has, and one and child in town of 10,000 inhabitants. In other words, we ship groceries sufficient every day to fill 10,000 mouths and to satisfy the cravings of 10,000 stomachs."

"From what do you receive your best advertising return?" "Our best advertising return comes from our catalogues, but one of the very best mediums in the talk of the retail dealers. They run us down to goods and our methods. This comes to the ears of our customers. The result is, the retailer antagonizes his customer by lying about us, and very naturally that customer comes to us, because he knows he will get the greatest value for his money, and if he isn't satisfied, he will get his money back. Many of these country retail merchants remind me of a lot of old ladies at a tea party. They must talk you know, and when they talk somebody is always listening. The retailers abuse us, and call us all manner of names. They tried to boycott us at this exposition and wipe us off the face of the earth generally. Then, before they finished they admitted their grievance was that they could not compete with us and that we ought to be driven out of business because we undersold them. The farmers know we undersell everybody. We don't give the price we pay no more attention to prices others make than if they didn't exist. We know what our goods cost. We know that when we add our customary small profit to our cost that competition is ended. No one can meet our prices, and give the same quality of goods." "You know," said the reporter, "that members of the Agricultural Dealers' association and many retail dealers tried to prevent your coming to this exposition." "Of course we know that," laughingly responded the advertising man, "and it was one of the most ridiculous things we ever heard of, and was an insult to the intelligence of the directors of the exposition. The idea of a body of men representing one of the most deserving expositions ever known, to be dictating to a lot of country merchants, who admit they can not make a success of their own business, then try to tell wholesale dealers, editors, bankers and capitalists how they should run the exposition! The 'wherrens' and 'resolutions' of these calamity howlers had just about as much effect on us as would be accomplished by a lot of boys attempting to sink a steel clad war vessel by pelting it with pebbles. Those retail dealers are not consistent. They demand the exclusive trade of the living in the vicinity, but they don't reciprocate. In other words, they ask a consumer to buy from them because they are home merchants regardless of the prices the consumer can get elsewhere. Do they pay the consumer more for his wheat, his corn, his produce, his stock than the consumer can obtain in

another market? Not much they don't. They usually pay less, and pay it in merchandise. Does the local merchant pay the home manufacturer of plows, of cigars, of furniture, etc., more than he pays an outside manufacturer? No, indeed, on the contrary, he writes for outside quotations, trusts them in the face of the local manufacturer, and uses those prices as a club to beat the latter down on prices. Does the local merchant pay the home miller more for his flour than he pays outside parties? Not by a jug full, he invariably pays less on the plea that his customers demand such and such flour, manufactured at some other town. Does he try to build up a trade for his local manufacturer by advocating his goods in preference to others? Not that we ever heard of. Then admitting that he does not patronize home manufacturers, admitting that as a business man he buys where he can do the best, hasn't he a heap of nerve to ask the patronage of people, demanding of them from 15 per cent to 40 per cent more for his goods than they can get the same for elsewhere? We think so, so do 2,000,000 others who buy from us regularly, and so will 1,000,000 more inside of the next twelve months, for we are now on a campaign of education, and we propose to enlighten the people of the west and northwest on what economical buying is. Instead of those 'kickers' gutting their shoulders to the wheel and trying to make a success of the exposition, they have been a hindrance and a nuisance. They have written the directors personal letters and pursued cowardly tactics to have us ejected from the grounds, our beautiful building torn down, and why? Because, as one of them said, 'If our customers see Montgomery Ward & Co.'s exhibit and prices, then we'll lose their trade.' They remind us of children who refuse to play unless others play their game. We play nobody's game, our mission in this life is to sell the consumer everything he needs at wholesale prices. These men, who fear the loss of a little trade, are too insignificant to grasp the far-reaching scope of this exposition—an exposition which surpasses anything America has ever seen with the single exception of the World's fair. I know what I am talking about, and I tell you sir, that the day will come when the pleasant recollection of our lives, and the proudest moment to all of us of the west will be when we recall the beauties, the worth and the general magnificence of this exposition. Men who threatened to boycott it because of some imagined grievance would be guilty of throwing mud on a bed of flowers, which, with dew on every petal was casting sweet fragrance on the morning winds, and halloing its surroundings. But, you know, it takes all kinds of people to make this world.

In contrast to the way many retailers acted about this exposition, compare our actions. We have hundreds of thousands of customers who will attend it and we want it to be a credit to the west. We advertised the exposition in 300,000 large catalogues. We advertised it in 150,000 small ones. We advertised it in more than 1,000,000 circulars. We advertised it in 310,000 almanacs and year books and we are reaching 10,000 different people every day, inviting them to the exposition. Do you know of any other concern or half hundred concerns who have done as much for the exposition? And to show you the effects of our advertising we permit you to copy this letter from Mr. E. Rosewater, editor of your paper and manager of the Department of Publicity and Promotion:

OMAHA, Jan. 11, 1898.—Messrs. Montgomery Ward & Co., Chicago, Ill.—Gentlemen: I have your letter of December 24, stating that a package of

your almanacs containing a chapter on the Trans-Mississippi Exposition would be mailed to my address. While the almanacs did not reach me, I have seen a copy and we are receiving requests daily for advertising matter from parties who quote the Almanac. You have done the exposition a very great service and the liberality shown is not only appreciated by me, but by the entire exposition management. Very truly yours, (Signed) E. ROSEWATER, Manager Department Publicity and Promotion.

That we have not done more was because we did not have the opportunity. We wrote and offered to take 500,000 souvenir postage stamps commemorative of your exposition, but couldn't get them. Here's a copy of our letter:

CHICAGO, Jan. 12, 1898.—Mr. E. Rosewater, Manager Department Publicity and Promotion, Omaha, Neb.—Dear Sir: Replying to your favor of the 11th instant, we note with pleasure that what you did for us in our Almanac and Year Book is being instrumental in sending to you many inquiries for advertising matter relative to the exposition. We understand you are going to have postage stamps in behalf of the exposition, similar to those used at the World's fair, issued, of course, by the government. We want to do all we can to make the exposition a success, and, therefore, make this proposition to you: If you will have the stamps delivered to us on or before February 1 next, we will take eight hundred thousand (800,000) one cent stamps, for which we will pay you eight thousand dollars (\$8,000) cash. These stamps we will use in sending out the announcement of our spring and summer catalogue. We will send out over a million announcements, but we can use 800,000 stamps as stated. You will see at once what a great advertisement these stamps will be for the exposition, and we believe it is the largest single order ever placed by any concern for postage stamps.

Should you accept our proposition, it is with the distinct understanding that the stamps must be delivered to us on or before February 1 as we must have them not later than that date. Please advise us at once whether or not you accept our proposition.

Yours truly, MONTGOMERY WARD & CO. (Signed) W. B. LEPPINGWELL, Adv. Mgr.

"I only tell you these things to show you how we have spent time and thousands of dollars to make this exposition a success while others have been threatening to keep their wives and children from the exposition if we came in. Now, don't you think for a moment we feel hard toward those people, for I assure you we don't. The trouble is, they don't know us, but they will before many months, for it is our intention to send our advertising cars to their towns to distribute advertising matter and paint large signs advertising our business. In that way their customers will become fully posted on our prices, and they can decide intelligently then whether it is to their interest to buy from us or patronize their local dealer.

"You remember that familiar saying of Davy Crockett, 'Be sure you're right, then go ahead.' That's the way we do business. We know when we are right, and, knowing it, we go ahead. These meddling retail dealers are like cobwebs which we touch. They break asunder and that is the

end. The constitution of the United States guarantees to every man the peaceful pursuit of his business. It does not restrict the merchant to certain selling prices. It does not compel him to pay the producer a certain price for his commodities, and it is a case of the survival of the fittest. We manufacture many of our goods, we come honestly by the others, and we have the right to sell them at any price we choose. Indeed, if we give them away it is nobody's business, for, having legally obtained the ownership of personal property, we can dispose of it in any manner that pleases our fancy."

"We were among the first to apply for space at this exposition. We did not question the price, only we stated that we wished a large space and the opportunity of choosing from such as was not taken. The liberal space we took and our large appropriation of \$25,000 has, we believe, been instrumental in causing several states to increase the appropriations they originally intended. Had we not made our own appropriation for space early, and had every retail dealer in America combined against our exhibiting at this exposition, we would have come here just the same, for the courts do not recognize creeds or opinions. This exposition has extended its invitations to all the world, and the courts would have let us in, always having in mind that sacred principle—that justice be done, though the heavens fall."

"Now I am going to make a little confession to you just to show you how meddling people often throw out a boomerang, and by trying to avoid a danger, their very acts bring it upon them. The agricultural implement dealers were the first to oppose our coming to this exposition, and they took all kinds of solemn vows to the effect that we shouldn't come in if they had to break up the exposition to keep us out. Candidly, we had no expectation of exhibiting agricultural implements here, for our exceedingly low prices bring us about all the trade we can handle at the present time without enlarging our factories, but when they said we should not show agricultural implements at the exposition we decided to run that part of it to suit ourselves, and, as you will notice by stepping down stairs, we have as complete an exhibit of agricultural implements as can be found on the grounds."

"You spoke of advertising cars; do you have them?" asked the reporter.

"Oh yes, we own two very beautiful ones, which, with a corps of men, are making a tour of the United States at the present time. They are named 'Success' and 'Progress.' It was our intention to have them in Wisconsin this summer, but, as many dealers in Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota and Kansas need object lessons, we will send the cars to those states this summer and next fall.

"The car 'Success' is 55 feet long, 10 feet wide and 14 feet high. It was built at a cost of \$10,000. It is divided into kitchen, pantry, buffet, sleeping apartments and observation room. The kitchen, occupying one end, is supplied with the latest style 'Wilkes' range, large refrigerator, numerous cupboards, sinks and drawers, and all the conveniences of the modern dining car. The central portion of the car is divided into five Pullman sections of double upper and lower berth, affording sleeping accommodations for twenty persons. There are also two sets of closets, or wardrobes, and toilets in this division. The observation room is 10x15 feet in size, with two side doors, and two doors and a window opening on rear platform. The furnishings are of the Pullman design, and the same as found on the regular Pullman sleeper. The car is finished in ash and hard oil, and is heated by the

circulating hot water system and lighted by electricity. The trucks are the standard Pullman six-wheel trucks, with Allen patent car wheels and Westinghouse air brakes. The outside appearance of the advertising car 'Progress' will, perhaps, compare favorably with the car 'Success,' at the same time the car is not so expensively gotten up, or so handsomely finished in its interior. Our object in buying it was, that our representatives might have a car to carry the things essential to make their journey pleasant and to accomplish the objects of their trip. This car contains an electric carriage, a fine gas engine and dynamo, for use in charging the batteries which furnish the electric current to propel the carriage, and another set of batteries which supplies electric light for the two cars. In this car are always carried the necessary supplies, paints, oils and stencils, souvenir books, pamphlets, specimen catalogues and all kinds of advertising matter, also the musical instruments, scenery and other paraphernalia used by those who give our entertainments."

"Surely that is an elaborate system of advertising," said the reporter, "and I judge that your employees give some kind of an entertainment." "Indeed, they do, and a most excellent one at the cars. All is free. We have a horseless carriage with the car, and we always give our friends and customers a free ride. The horseless carriage is quite similar to the one here on the grounds, and people come miles and miles to see it." "That is a very beautiful horseless carriage you have here," remarked the reporter. "We think so. It was built expressly for us to have at this exposition, cost about \$2,000, and embodies everything up-to-date. It has strong batteries, and will run fifty miles without recharging. We have it here for the use of our guests and customers, and they are welcome to ride in it free. Some time when you are here get into it and take a ride down around the Horticultural and State buildings, and see how delightful the sensation is of riding in a vehicle propelled by 'invisible force.'"

"You must print a great deal of advertising matter and employ a great many people," suggested the reporter.

"We have 2,000,000 customers. No other concern in the world has half so many. We employ 1,300 clerks and own the buildings in which we are doing business. We use fifteen acres of floor space for commercial purposes. Even that great space is not sufficient and we have contracted to erect other buildings adjoining ours, twelve stories high, which will give us a total of thirty acres of floor space. It requires fully 125 cartloads of paper each year to supply us with catalogues, etc. This includes 1,250,000 catalogues, general and special, and more than 3,000,000 pamphlets, folders, circulars, etc."

"We have customers in every county of the United States of America and ship goods regularly to Alaska, China, Ceylon, Asia, Africa, Austral, Great Britain, Germany, France, Russia, Cuba, Mexico, Canada and in every portion of the world where the English language is spoken."

"This has been a very long interview," said the advertising manager, "but I have told you of the business of the house I represent and told it without exaggeration. We have carried on this business for twenty-six years. Our sales for 1897 were \$8,000,000 and are increasing at the rate of more than \$1,000,000 a year, and, bear in mind this fact, for it is a sacred promise with us, what we promise to do we do and if any one patronizes us and does not find goods as represented they can have their money back on demand and we'll stand transportation charges both ways."



Contract has been made for the erection of these buildings, at the north-west corner of Madison street and Michigan avenue, Chicago, Ill., the same to be completed during the summer of 1899. They will be owned and occupied by Montgomery Ward & Co., who will carry in them a stock of goods amounting to over \$2,000,000.00, and a force of clerks, estimated at 2,000, will be constantly employed filling out-of-town orders to consumers.