

Catalog



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Since 1872 when traveling salesman Aaron Montgomery Ward realized he could eliminate the middleman and sell goods directly to his customers, Americans have had an ongoing love affair with the mail-order catalog, which continues undiminished even in today's online-driven world. The practical can find deals on furniture and clothing in L.L.Bean and Sears, the extravagant can consider his and hers matching helicopters, windmills, hot-air balloons, and submarines in the Neiman Marcus Fantasy Catalog; those looking to get their pulses racing can browse Victoria's Secret and Abercrombie & Fitch; while our inner swashbuckler can travel the world through the pages of the J. Peterman Owner's Manual where Moroccan caftans, Russian Navy t-shirts, and wooden water buckets from rural China entice the imagination.

In *Catalog: The Illustrated History of Mail Order Shopping*, Robin Cherry traces the timeline of these snapshots from American history and discovers along the way how we dressed, decorated our houses, worked, played, and got around. From corsets to bell-bottoms, from baby-doll dresses and Doc Martens all the way to iPods, the history of these catalogs is the history of our lives and our culture. GIs during World War II were kept company by the models in the pages of lingerie catalogs; hockey goalies fashioned makeshift shin guards out of them during the Great Depression, and creative

children across the country still play with homemade paper dolls cut from clothing catalogs. A number of celebrities got their start modeling for catalogs: Gregory Peck, Lauren Bacall, Katherine Heigl, Matthew Fox, and Angelina Jolie. Jimi Hendrix and Bob Dylan both got their first guitars from the Sears catalog. Organized into categories such as clothing, food, animals, and houses, author Robin Cherry explores the vivid stories behind Sears, Montgomery Ward, Lillian Vernon, Harry & David, Jackson & Perkins, and of course, 45 years of the Neiman Marcus Christmas Book. Insightful historical commentary places these catalogs in their social context, making this book a visual pleasure and a historically important piece of Americana.

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