

Montgomery Ward, The Original Grange Supply...

In 1872 young Aaron Montgomery Ward started selling quality merchandise mail order at wholesale prices exclusively to Grange members. The '70s were horse and buggy days and making a trip to town on dirt roads that were often rutted and muddy was a not an easy task. Stores often had limited selections at high prices so the rural community immediately embraced having affordable merchandise delivered. Montgomery Ward not only offered practical items but also luxury items that one might associate with city life such as a "silver plated drinking cup lined with gold plate" or "ivory handle silk fan".

With the first ever "Satisfaction or Your Money Back" guarantee customers were confident buying goods sight unseen. Business flourished. By 1949 the Montgomery Ward catalogue was voted one of the top 100 books with the most influence on the life and culture of the American people by the Grolier Club, a society of bibliophiles in New York. The first "catalogue" had been a one-page list of 163 items, mostly \$1 each but by the time it received this book-of great-influence recognition Wards not only sold household items but also began selling houses, offering 73 models of kit homes.

Montgomery Ward set the bar for low prices and in this way fought monopolies, one of the Grange's primary goals. Mail order made it possible for rural Americans to purchase items to beautify their homes another Grange goal. Well-kept homes improved the image of farm life and helped establish a greater sense of pride among farming people.

Chicago was the birthplace of Montgomery Ward but the business spread across the nation. There was even a catalog store established here in Port Townsend in 1969. That store was located in buildings now occupied by The Printery and Badd Habit but by then the business had little resemblance to the business that first advertised itself as "The Cheapest Cash House in

America”.