

# INSIDE JOHN WANAMAKER

News Release

A  
BRIEF  
HISTORY  
OF  
JOHN WANAMAKER  
1861 TO THE PRESENT

Jim — If you took a copy of this,  
Thinking that Baker might want to  
incorporate into his remarks — Thought  
I would pass along in case it needed  
for part of his remarks. Thanks  
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## JOHN WANAMAKER

### A PHILADELPHIA TRADITION, AN AMERICAN INSTITUTION

Regarded as one of the great emporiums in the United States today, Wanamaker's attained its well-respected position by closely adhering to the ideas of its founder, John Wanamaker. Chiselled into a pillar in the Grand Court of the flagship store in Philadelphia is his simple credo: "Let those who follow me continue to build with the plumb of honor, the level of truth and the square of integrity, education, courtesy and mutual-ity."

Presently an important chain of retail stores in four states, Wanamaker's is composed of a flagship store in center city Philadelphia along with fourteen suburban branches. But no matter how big Wanamaker's is today, it is still interesting to remember how Wanamaker's got its start. Quite simply: John Wanamaker began as a small men's clothing shop that opened April 8, 1861 on the very site of what once was the home of George Washington, the first President of the United States. Despite the auspicious location, the first day's receipts were anything but inspiring: \$24.67.

With great determination young Wanamaker plowed \$24 of this amount back into advertising, and within fifteen years had expanded his business to such an extent that he was able to take over The Grand Depot, an abandoned railroad shed. He decided on this location for what he conceived to be a "new kind of store". The Grand Depot, eventually to be the site of the present flagship store at Thirteenth and Market Streets in Philadelphia, employed 700 people at that time.

John Wanamaker's "new kind of store" sold more than just men's and boys' clothing. Now he could also offer dress goods, silks and women's clothing, as well as linens and home furnishings. His buyers also brought back

to his eager clientele the cream of the European markets, particularly fashions from Paris, London and Berlin. In 1878, Wanamaker introduced the White Sale to the United States which fast became an institution in American retailing. (Briefly, a White Sale is generally scheduled in January of every year, and a whole variety of household goods go on sale--particularly sheets and towels.)

By 1902, business had once again increased so dramatically that a still larger store than The Grand Depot was required. Always the risk-taking innovator, John Wanamaker now made the unprecedented decision to continue business at The Grand Depot while completely rebuilding it in three stages. The result, in 1911, was the granite-faced Roman-Doric structure that is still in use today; the building was once enthusiastically described as a "merchant cathedral".

So impressive was Wanamaker's accomplishment that no less than the President of the United States, William Howard Taft, came to dedicate the new store before guests numbering over 35,000. Among the many other international figures who hailed Wanamaker's architectural triumph were the Emperor and Empress of Japan, who sent their good wishes along with a gift.

On December 12, 1922, the initial stages of Wanamaker's growth came to an end when John Wanamaker died at the age of 84.

What lives on, however, is the concern for his customers that John Wanamaker always cultivated. His was an innovative philosophy that distinguished Wanamaker from other retailers of his day, and it is the very same philosophy that John Wanamaker's present management continues to stress among its employees.

First and foremost among his marketing departures for the benefit of the customer was the establishing of one fixed price, plainly marked, for every piece of merchandise. Until this time, customers had been forced

to haggle over the price of everything they wanted to buy.

Another cardinal Wanamaker principle on behalf of the customer was that all merchandise should be of good quality and honestly labelled. If for any reason a customer was dissatisfied with his purchase, Wanamaker believed that person should have the right to return it and receive his money back.

Finally, John Wanamaker believed that customers should be able to come into his store to browse and enjoy shopping without being pressured into buying.

Small wonder that the rapport built up between merchant and customer, based on honesty, confidence and mutual satisfaction led to one of the most phenomenal success stories in all of retailing history—John Wanamaker.

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## THE WANAMAKER BUILDING

Occupying one entire city block in the heart of Philadelphia, directly across from the City Hall, this imposing twelve-story Roman-Doric structure rises 247 feet from the sidewalk and encloses nearly 2,000,000 square feet of floor space. The concrete-and-marble walls of each story are free and independent structures that could be removed without disturbing the others. The framework is steel, with an exterior facing of Maine granite. The building has been declared a national landmark by the government of the United States.

Perhaps the most outstanding feature of the John Wanamaker flagship store is its Grand Court. Designed like a marvelous wedding cake, white and gold terraces rise up on all four sides of an open court--affording a positively stupendous view of shoppers, merchandise, the huge pipe organ, and the gold eagle sculpture that has become John Wanamaker's own symbol.

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## THE WANAMAKER EAGLE

An outstanding example of modern metal sculpture and the only art object of its kind in the world, the Wanamaker eagle dominates the Grand Court of the Philadelphia store. Originally constructed for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in 1904, the eagle stands 6'6" tall and weighs 2,500 pounds. It is perched on its own 4,500-pound granite pedestal.

All the parts--the heavy plates that form the inner structure, as well as the feathers and other surface parts--were separately handcrafted with chisel, file and hammer. Every individual feather on the head and body was molded and fitted into place by hand, involving more than five months of labor. There are 1,600 feathers on the head alone; 5,000 in all.

Small wonder Philadelphians still tell each other "to meet me at the eagle"!

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## THE WANAMAKER ORGAN

One of the largest and finest instruments of its kind, the John Wanamaker organ was originally constructed for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904. Designed by George Ashdown Audsley and built by the Los Angeles Art Organ Company, the organ has since been expanded from its original 140 stops and 10,059 pipes to its present 451 stops and 30,067 pipes. Weighing nearly two-and-a-half tons, it rests on a pivot-and-track platform above the Grand Court that can be turned at will. All six manuals, 451 stops and 964 controls are within the player's reach.

Brought to Philadelphia in thirteen freight cars and rebuilt in the Wanamaker Grand Court in 1911, it has been played every business day since, often by celebrated international virtuosi. On March 27, 1919, for example, Charles M. Courboin, the famous Belgian organist, gave the first American performance of Charles Marie Widor's Sixth Symphony for orchestra and organ, ably assisted by The Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Leopold Stokowski. In November, 1921, Marcel Dupre, organist of the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, made his American debut on the Wanamaker organ. Other international artists who have played this truly magnificent instrument include: Italy's Enrico Bossi and Fernando Germani, Scotland's Alfred Hollins, France's Louis Vierne and Nadia Boulanger and England's G.D. Cunningham, as well as America's own Virgil Fox.

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### OTHER WANAMAKER FIRSTS

Although too numerous to mention here (a booklet published in 1926 contained ninety-one pages of Wanamaker innovations), some of the more noteworthy Wanamaker firsts include:

- . 1861 -- quality of merchandise guaranteed in print
- . 1865 -- one-price-for-all system established; refunds for returned merchandise guaranteed
- . 1876 -- first general restaurant in any store opened to the public
- . 1876 -- mail-order bureau opened
- . 1877 -- Paris and Berlin fashions have their first large American presentation
- . 1878 -- Wanamaker's became the first store to be lighted by electricity
- . 1879 -- first full-page newspaper advertisements
- . 1880 -- opening of first Paris office of any general American store
- . 1885 -- first \$1,000,000 day of total sales
- . 1907 -- Wanamaker's became the world's first store to establish day and night telephone-order service
- . 1907 -- the first store to receive and transmit radiograms
- . 1909 -- Japanese Imperial commission visits the store, Japanese office opened in Yokohama
- . 1910 -- first full-page ads in the Paris Herald
- . 1911 -- world's largest org. called
- . 1912 -- the store's Marconi wireless station was the first in America to receive the news of the sinking of the Titanic

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