



# Historic Sears, Roebuck and Co. Catalog Plant (Images of America)

*John Oharenko*

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Located on the site of the original Sears Tower, the historic Sears, Roebuck and Company catalog plant is one of the nation's most unique landmarks. Representing American ingenuity at its best, Richard Sears and Julius Rosenwald combined technology, commerce, and social science with bricks and mortar to build "the World's Largest Store" on Chicago's West Side. Completed in 1906, the plant housed nearly every conceivable product of the time: clothing, jewelry, furniture, appliances, tools, and more. The complex employed 20,000 people, and merchandise orders were processed and delivered by rail--within the same day. During the first two decades of the 20th century, almost half of America's families shopped the over 300 million catalogs published in that era. WLS (World's Largest Store) Radio broadcasted the Gene Autrey show from the top of the tower, and the first Sears retail store opened here on Homan Avenue and Arthington Street. In 1974, Sears moved to the current Sears Tower. Thanks to many individuals who fought to save these architecturally and historically important treasures, the administration building, the original Sears Tower, the catalog press-laboratory building, and the powerhouse remain today. There are currently plans for redeveloping these buildings into housing, office, and retail space. A new Homan Square Community Center stands on the site of the merchandise building.

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