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From: News Bureau - Room 262
THE MERCHANDISE MART
Chicago 54, Illinois

THE WORLD'S GREATEST MARKET PLACE

THE MERCHANDISE MART

On the banks of the Chicago River which, strangely enough flows up-stream, and within a stone's throw from where the native American Indians brought their wares to trade with the white men, stands the world's largest market-place, The Merchandise Mart. Conceived and built by one of the finest names in the merchandising world, Marshall Field & Company, The Mart was sold in 1945 to Joseph P. Kennedy, Boston banker and former ambassador to England.

A city-under-one-roof with a daily working population of more than 20,000 persons, and where more than a half-million buying visits are made annually, The Mart is one of the most amazing structures in all the world.

In 1930, when first it opened its doors to tenant firms and the public-- it was the largest single structure in size in the whole world. Today, only the huge Pentagon Building of the U. S. Government, in Washington, exceeds The Mart in physical size.

If the same amount of building area,--4,023,400 square feet--had been included in New York City's giant Empire State building, the latter would be 169 stories high instead of its present 102--in other words it would extend two-fifths of a mile above the ground.

From every corner of the world, every year, come the buyers of merchandise, seeking out from the 850 market tenant firms, the newest and finest in furniture, housewares, automatic appliances, floor coverings, wall coverings, men's, women's and infants' apparel, toys, glassware and pottery, artware, giftware and the hundreds of other odds and ends that are to be found in this vast marketplace that is open 52 weeks a year.

The children of India now play with metal toys fabricated in America because the shopkeepers of Bombay and Calcutta have wended their way to The Merchandise Mart and placed their orders for shipment to the Orient. In South Africa, buyers for shops and department stores make the long trek to America and to the vast marketplace on the banks of the Chicago River.

Here all the world buys--and also sells, for the artwork of the Orient, the fine pottery of Limoges, the laces of Belgium and Ireland can be found among the stocks of domestic goods displayed here for the buyers who come.

These buyers are not Mr. and Mrs. Consumer--for this is strictly a building for wholesale business only. No vast stocks of goods are stored here--merely the samples of the newest and finest products of the tenant firm, on display in showrooms that have cost as much as a quarter-million dollars each to design and decorate. Orders are placed by buyers from department stores and retail shops, and the goods ordered from the displayed samples are shipped from the company's own warehouses or assembly lines.

Though only registered buyers from recognized stores are permitted to make purchases, the general public is cordially invited to take escorted tours of the building. These tours were started by the management to satisfy the growing national interest in the home and all the furniture rugs, lamps, appliances and other things that go into it. In The Mart, Mrs. America can see a much broader range of products than would be possible in any one or two department or furniture stores, which could never display the some 1,200,000 separate items shown in The Mart.

So in 1948, the doors of The Merchandise Mart were opened to the general public, and the first showing of home goods featuring the newest products of American factories was begun. Now, Monday through Friday, specially trained young women conduct tours on a half-hour schedule and several hundred people each day pay a nominal fee to take the hour and a quarter journey through this city under a single roof. Surveys have shown that as a direct result of the tours a great per cent of those taking them returned to their local store and purchased some item of home goods.

Probably in no other single building is there such an amazing example of merchandise display methods. The very latest in lighting effects, use of color, material and design is here for the storekeeper anxious to increase his business. Literally hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent every year--and often twice a year--by the tenant firms to bring their showrooms to a point of rare beauty and display effectiveness unsurpassed in the mercantile world.

As new products of beauty are introduced, so must the stage-setting for these products be changed. It is a continuously changing panorama, a kaleidoscope of decoration and design, devised by the nation's leading artists to catch the eye of the buyer and to enhance the beauty of the product by its surroundings.

Consulting the semi-annually published "Buyers Guide"--which is the pocket-sized directory of The Merchandise Mart and its firms and products--one sees that nearly 700 pages are devoted to listing the goods available and the firms offering them for sale. In alphabetical order, from "Acetate Fabrics" to the final "Yarns; Hand Knitting", one may find items ranging from Airplanes and Kits, to Household Appliances; from Baby Books, Balloons and Barometers, to Wheel Goods, Woodburning Sets and Waste Baskets.

There are bathroom fixtures; bedding; and blankets; Chinaware, clocks and club furniture; draperies and other fabrics; field glasses, furniture of every type; gloves, globes, and glues; grandfathers clocks, greeting cards and germicides.

So through the whole alphabet is page after page of listings by type of article only, and over 3200 more by firm name and location; this catalogue of goods carries one around the world in scope and variety.

The building itself is a magnificent structure, dominating the entire Loop area from the northern end by its size and position. An aerial view of Chicago immediately shows The Mart's location and tremendous size, in comparison with the other great buildings in this mid-west metropolis. At night floodlamps play upon the building, with responding lights and shadows flickering in the waters of the Chicago River at its front door.

It has the most varied and the finest transportation service of any building in all Chicago, if not in the country. Elevated and electric trains have a station right in the building, itself, while surface trolleys, buses, taxicabs and private vehicles deliver thousands at any one of the four main entrances of the building. It is a few minutes ride from any of the major rail terminals, and even mail and an occasional passenger have been delivered on a section of the building's huge roof where a helicopter landing field is laid out.

More than 30,000 persons can be fed daily in the restaurants, lunchrooms, and sandwich bars in The Mart. One of the largest post office branches in Chicago is located on the main floor--it has a bank with thousands of depositors and airline, railroad and travel bureau services. One may rent a new automobile by the day or week on a moment's notice in the main lobby. The upper floors have both the National Broadcasting Company and the American Broadcasting Company studios and executive offices, as well as television studios.

Imagine a single building corridor stretching away for more than 650 feet in length! The constant stream of humanity through the main halls, entrances and transportation facilities makes one think of the big railroad terminal at the height of a holiday rush period. Yet all moves orderly and in proper sequence.

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The United States Government and the State of Illinois occupy thousands of feet of space for important bureaus. Some of the country's outstanding industrial companies maintain their home or regional offices on the lower floors of the building or in the tower. Yet, it is not an office building. But it is only in such an amazing structure as The Merchandise Mart that the entire office force of a huge corporation can be placed on just a part of a single floor in an area comprising almost three acres, as are the general offices of The Pullman Co. Incidentally, every pullman ticket sold is ultimately processed in The Mart. Still the major space is allotted to display rooms with floor after floor of showrooms, beautifully decorated and filled with the finest products of the nation.

The Mart has its own police force - its own private two-block street, The Merchandise Mart Plaza. Its elevators can handle 25,000,000 people or more a year, yet new ones have just been installed to give better service to the ever increasing traffic that comes to the "Colossus of Chicago."

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(See Fact Sheet Attached)