

As it is Now, Shopping Local Was Right Thing to Do in 1910

I hope that you were able to celebrate Thanksgiving in some meaningful way this year. We have so much to be thankful for in spite of the pandemic that we are going through. Hoping that it will all be behind us in the not-too-distant future.

We are now officially into the Christmas season, which will also be different this year. We often see the "Shop Small" signs around town as well as advertisements about it on television. Today is Shop Small Saturday. It may be even more important to shop locally this year than in previous years. Some of the local businesses are set up so that you can order online which will make shopping much easier. Statistics show that \$68 of each \$100 spent locally stays in the community. Small businesses donate 250% more to community causes than large businesses. Not only are you supporting local people, but your sales tax stays here as well.

Long before computers and the internet, the Monroe Evening Times was supporting the concept of shopping local. Companies like Sears, Roebuck and Co. and Montgomery Ward Inc. were putting out catalogs from which the locals could order items as large as a house. A heading in the paper on August 13, 1903 stated, "BUY AT HOME" with a subheading, "Citizens Should be Interested In Monroe's Welfare and Help Make City Prosperous." It went on to say that, "Every citizen of Monroe is or should be interested in the growth and prosperity of the city." It also reminded people that the Monroe merchants pay a good portion of the taxes. It ended with, "Build up your home trade is a good principle for a city as for a country. Let all work together to build up the city and all reap the benefit." Even though the wording wasn't perfect, the concept was flawless.

Several articles about the same topic were printed in the December 15, 1910 issue. One called the mail order business "the quack doctor of commerce." It went on to say that, "no mail order house helped to build the little white school in your district" or "turnpike the road past your door." It also mentioned that those houses never "sold you a vehicle and spent every cent of its profits right in the community where you and your neighbors could get it all back."

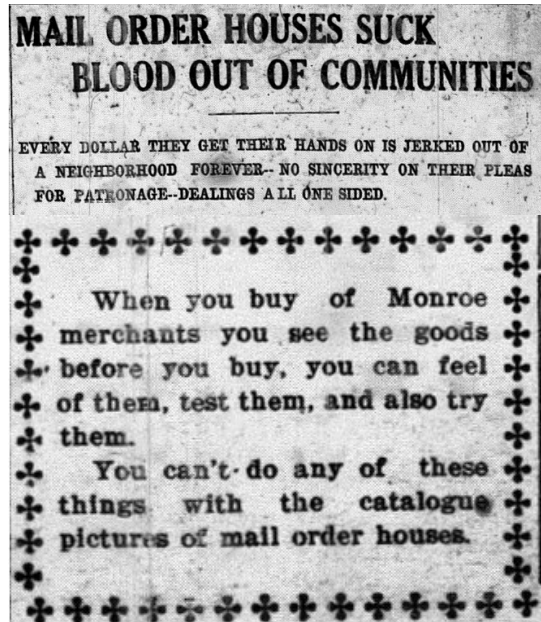
My thought is that these articles were not written locally, but were printed in many newspapers throughout the country. It advised that the people should, "Stand by your local dealer as he stands by you with his time, his skill and his money. He helps to build up the community and he makes it a better place for you both to live. His own success depends upon your prosperity. He has no use for mavericks - unbranded junk." This article also said, "If there is one logical reason why you should patronize out of town merchants there are a hundred reasons why you should give your home merchants the preference."

According to the internet, amazon.com made a profit of 11.4 billion dollars in 2019. The paper of 1910 already said, "The mail order houses continue to draw immense profits from the people. Their 'system' is a powerful one. Especially during the approach of the Christmas season do the offers become attractive.

"There is no use in denying that the prices of these houses are often lower than those of local stores, but when postage, money orders, expressage, and everything is considered it will be found that the advantage is on the side of the home merchants.

"Often times a woman who has the mail order habit will buy stuff for which she has no real need in order to 'fill out' a good sized bill, thinking that by so doing she is economizing.

It is poor economy to buy from mail order houses and it is one way in which you can express your indifference to your home city's welfare."



This heading and the other clipping were taken from the December 15, 1910 issue of the Monroe Evening Times. The mail order houses had a large effect on the economy then, like the internet does now.

The following Buy At Home Creed, from the Journal of National Business, was also included in the same paper.

I Buy At Home because my interests are here;
Because, the community which is good enough for me to live in is good enough to buy in;
Because, I want to see the goods;
Because, I want to get what I pay for it;
Because, my home dealer carries me when I "run short;"
Because, every dollar I spend at home stays at home, and works for the community in which I live;
Because, the man I buy from stands back of the goods;
Because, I sell what I produce, here at home and here I buy;
Because, the man I buy from pays his part of the town, county and state tax;
Because, the man I buy from helps support my schools, my church, my lodge, my home;
Because, when ill luck, misfortune bereavement comes, the man I buy from is here with his kindly greeting, his words of cheer and his pocket book if need be.
Here I live, and here I buy.
I BUY AT HOME.

It seems that even though so much has changed in terms of technology and life experiences, there are also many similarities to the way life was. I wish each of you an enjoyable Christmas season. Please remember our local businesses who have also had an interesting 2020.