

**Field's ladies macy:** As the Civil War ended in 1865, Marshall Field and Levi Leiter opened a store on the corner of Washington and State in Chicago. Their marble-fronted palace catered to the ladies.

The Chicago fire of 1871 destroyed the building as intense heat pulverized the marble. Field had salvaged much merchandise, and opened a temporary store in a horse barn at State and Twentieth. Though not elegant, elegance prevailed. Red velvet draperies wrapped pillars and distinctive carpets adorned walls. Marshall Field greeted every lady at the door, salesmen were distinctively dressed, and flowers garnished department heads' lapels.

In 1873 they returned to State and Washington in a new five-story mansard-roof building with a huge glass dome in its center. Glowing gas chandeliers hung from frescoed ceilings. Clerks were patient, polite, and persistently reminded goods could be exchanged or returned for full refund. The customer is always right was drilled into Field's salesclerks. If he saw a customer arguing over a purchase, he would gently pull on the clerk's coattail and whisper to him, "Give the lady what she wants."

Women's wages forced many to work nights to supply the male demand for escorts and prostitutes. Department store workers, however, had "glamour jobs" midst women they wished they were.

In the male-dominated culture most professions and all professional clubs were closed to women. The Union Club with its deep leather chairs, fireplaces, newspapers, and stewards who would quickly fetch beverages or edibles, was a bastion sans women as was the Dearborn Club, the Rotary, and other male.orgs. Membership was limited to professional and business "men" of high ranking.

But the elite society that emerged after the Great Fire produced a "New Chicago Woman" who set fashion trends and shopped at Field & Leiter's. The business of shopping was an accepted activity for women. It grew to be a liberating escape for middle- and upper-class women locked into Victorian traditions and houses.

Shopping became a form of urban entertainment, windowshopping, a new urban pastime. City stores catered to women and recognized their new marketplace impact and buying power. An estimated 99 percent of State Street purchases were women transacted. Field bought out Leiter in 1880 and by the turn of the century Field's was the largest retail store on earth. When told that women were leaving his store to go home for lunch, he opened a small tearoom. A complete floor of elegant restaurants resulted.

Marshall Field's became a woman's retreat analogous to her husband's men's club. She could socialize, eat in restaurants, lounge in parlors, try on clothes, order deliveries, and return any merchandise that failed to please. She could execute her day midst objects of beauty and value from around the world. Attentive clerks showered shoppers with personal courtesies in an unhurried manner. Customers were not negotiated with, but waited upon. Rich or poor, famous or not, sans men, every lady was treated honorably. No one was to leave his store dissatisfied.

Marshall Field left his store and the world on January 16, 1906. A bell rung, shades were drawn, aisles darkened, business suspended in his hallowed monument.

After five days, the new president, John G. Shedd, reopened and activated plans to tear down the building and build anew. On September 30, 1907 some 8,000, mostly

ladies, waited outside under a prominently hung clock for 8:00 a.m. and doors to open. Inside they were awed by the Tiffany dome six floors above and all the grandeur beneath.

Rumors woefully suggested Shedd might add his name to the store, but he saw to retain the Marshall Field name. Shedd retired in 1923 to build an aquarium. New managers also saw to retain the name well into 2006 as Field's ladies "\*macy. "

Sources: Give *The Lady What She Wants!*, Lloyd Wendt & Herman Kogan;  
*City of the Century*, Donald L. Miller; *Chicago*, Finis Farr