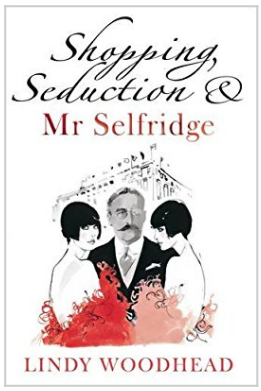

Shopping, Seduction & Mr Selfridge

By Lindy Woodhead

Shopping, Seduction & Mr Selfridge By Lindy Woodhead

The men who created the first department stores—what Zola called "great cathedrals of shopping"—made vast fortunes, but no one understood how shopping could become sexy as well as Mr. Selfridge. In 1909, his department store—London’s first and built from scratch—opened in a glorious burst of publicity, spearheaded by the largest advertising campaign ever mounted in the British press. In his eponymous store, Harry Gordon Selfridge created nothing less than "the theater of retail." His personal life was just as flamboyant—one of mistresses and mansions, racehorses and yachts. In this revealing narrative, author Lindy Woodhead tells the extraordinary story of a revolution in shopping, depicts the rise and fall of a retail prince, and unravels a slice of social history that will surprise and entertain any woman who loves to shop.

Shopping, Seduction & Mr Selfridge

By Lindy Woodhead

Shopping, Seduction & Mr Selfridge By Lindy Woodhead

The men who created the first department stores—what Zola called "great cathedrals of shopping"—made vast fortunes, but no one understood how shopping could become sexy as well as Mr. Selfridge. In 1909, his department store—London’s first and built from scratch—opened in a glorious burst of publicity, spearheaded by the largest advertising campaign ever mounted in the British press. In his eponymous store, Harry Gordon Selfridge created nothing less than "the theater of retail." His personal life was just as flamboyant—one of mistresses and mansions, racehorses and yachts. In this revealing narrative, author Lindy Woodhead tells the extraordinary story of a revolution in shopping, depicts the rise and fall of a retail prince, and unravels a slice of social history that will surprise and entertain any woman who loves to shop.

Shopping, Seduction & Mr Selfridge By Lindy Woodhead Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #915034 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Profile Books
- Published on: 2007-10
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 1.23" h x 6.40" w x 9.27" l, 1.10 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 310 pages

Editorial Review

Review
Selfridge was a man ahead of his time, an accelerator of change, and he deserves to be remembered as the man who put the fun on to the shop floor and the sex appeal in to shopping. Sunday Express gripping and excellently researched. Literary Review In this energetic and wonderfully detailed biography, Lindy Woodhead tells not only the story of the rise and dramatic fall of Selfridge, the man, but also provides an enthralling description of fashion, politics, music and dance, the arts, the science of advertising and the use of the media, during the decades before the Second war. Evening Standard

About the Author

Lindy Woodhead worked in international fashion public relations for more than 25 years and in the late 1980s became the first woman on the board of directors of Harvey Nichols. She is the author of *War Paint: The Biography of Helena Rubinstein and Elizabeth Arden*.

1.

The Fortunes of War

“Fashion is the mirror of history. It reflects political,social and economic changes, rather than mere whimsy.” —Louis XIV

In 1860, as America braced itself for civil war, business-men began to stockpile goods. No one knew better than the store owners what would happen when fabric became scarce. It wasn’t silks and satins that worried them, it was cotton—and they fretted more about the lack of it than the picking of it. In April 1861, when war was declared and President Lincoln issued his Proclamation of Blockade, speculation in cotton became rife, and panicking Northern mill owners were only too glad to forge associations with men who promised to continue the smooth flow of supplies from South to North.

When Union forces captured New Orleans in 1862, trade through the Mississippi Valley became particularly brisk. Cotton was also moved out via Memphis and Vicksburg, all of which kept the mills working—so much so that during the first two years of the war manufacturers still made a healthy profit. By 1863, however, supplies were dwindling and there was a short-age of men to run the machines. American spinning mills went on half-time production. As cotton goods became increasingly scarce, those who had filled a warehouse or two could name their price.

In New York, President Lincoln’s friend Alexander Stewart, the acknowledged “merchant prince” of the day, made enormous sums of money, having astutely cornered the market in domestic linen as well as cotton. Given that Mary Lincoln, a woman who clearly sought security through her possessions and for whom shopping was an addiction, spent thousands of dollars at Stewart’s Marble Palace—on one memorable visit she ordered eighty-four pairs of colored kid gloves—it is not surprising that Mr. Stewart was also rewarded with lucrative contracts to supply clothing to the Union army. Indeed, the war seemed to have no effect on the shopping habits of New York’s rich. The media criticized their “hedonistic approach during the daily slaughter wrought by the war,” but the pursuit of fashion carried on regardless.

Chicago too enjoyed a profitable war. The small town that had emerged out of the swampy Fort Dearborn just three decades earlier—and where some could still remember Chief Black Hawk and his warriors

swooping in to attack—was now the hub of America's biggest railroad network and the collecting point for food to supply both the East and the army. Awash with opportunity and swimming in cash, sprawling, still muddy, "rough and ready" Chicago became a boomtown. As the farm boys joined the army, production of Cyrus McCormick's reaping machines increased—as did his fortune. He wasn't alone. Whether it was pork, which Philip Armour bought at eighteen dollars a barrel and sold for forty dollars, or luxury Pullman cars developed by the railwayman George Pullman, Chicago tycoons were making millions of dollars—and their wives were helping them spend it.

The destination of choice for Chicago's shoppers was Potter Palmer's store on Lake Street. Palmer, who went on to become a property developer of immense skill, had started his career in Chicago in 1839 as a small-time dry-goods retailer. There was nothing small about his ambitions, however, nor his ability to judge women's desire to shop. He sold goods at fixed and fair prices, let his ladies take clothes home to try on, and left copies of Godey's Lady's Book (the fashion magazine of the time) in the store for browsing. Better yet, he read it himself. His maxim was "You've got to think big," and by the time war came, he had done so, stocking up on cotton goods, filling vast warehouses with everything from petticoats and pantalets to sheets and tea towels, and advertising his stock with a "money-back guarantee"—a revolutionary idea at the time.

Among the men who enlisted all over the North in 1861 was Robert Oliver Selfridge. At the age of thirty-eight he left his home in Ripon, a hamlet in Wisconsin 170 miles north of Chicago, where he ran a general store, to go to war. Reputed to be a sober, hardworking man and described as "a stalwart of local activity," he was also Master of the Ripon Freemasons' Lodge. Robert Selfridge and his wife, Lois, had three young sons—Charles Johnston, Robert Oliver Jr., and Henry Gordon (known as Harry). Though there has always been uncertainty in the Selfridge family over precise dates of birth, it seems likely that Harry was born on January 11, 1856. He was just five when his father went to war—and never returned.

Not that Major Selfridge died in battle. He was honorably discharged in 1865, whereupon he simply vanished. No one ever knew why. Perhaps, having witnessed the carnage, he had a nervous breakdown. Perhaps he simply wanted to be free of responsibilities. Whatever the case, he left his wife to bring up her family on her own, on the meager earnings of a teacher. Harry later described Lois as "brave, upstanding, and with indomitable courage." She was indeed brave, and she needed to be. Not long after the war her eldest son, Charles, died, and then her middle son, Robert. She was now left alone with young Harry.

Moving with her son to Jackson, Michigan, Lois found work as a primary-school teacher, earning around thirty dollars a month. Making ends meet was a constant struggle, so she supplemented her salary by painting Valentine and other novelty cards. Still with no word from her husband, she was left to assume that he was "missing, presumed dead." Only years later did she learn that he had been killed in a railway accident in Minnesota in 1873 and that she was—finally—a widow. Harry was shielded from the truth, growing up believing that his father had been "killed in battle," a story he would often repeat to the media. It would be years before he discovered the truth.

Hardly surprisingly, all the love Lois had left to give was centered on her young son. The two of them found genuine pleasure in each other's company and became such great friends that they continued to live together until the day she died. When things got bleak, they played a game called "Suppose," which involved imaginary plots about success through endeavor. "Suppose" they could afford a cottage with a bay window? Even "suppose" they were able to live in a castle with lots of servants? Though a pious woman who attended church regularly and abhorred alcohol, Lois was always happy to go to a new play or concert and was an avid reader, a pleasure she imbued in her son.

Mrs. Selfridge continued her career as a teacher, becoming the headmistress of Jackson High School, where the education of the town's young was entrusted to her capable care. The most important thing she taught Harry was never to fear failure. She was fond of saying, "Why should you worry about failing? There's always something else to try and you can excel in that instead." She taught Harry to be gracious. She taught

him impeccable manners. Finally, she taught him the importance of appearance. She would check his fingernails in the morning and again before supper—not that he needed much checking. From an early age Harry was fastidious, and he loved nothing better than wearing a clean shirt to school and polishing his boots until they gleamed.

When Harry wasn't dreaming about castles or maintaining his modest wardrobe, he had his head in a book, devouring stories by James Fenimore Cooper and Nathaniel Hawthorne, along with his favorite, Struggles and Triumphs, the well-thumbed autobiography of the great circus showman Phineas T. Barnum. The rags-to-riches story of Barnum inspired Harry to dream of a future far away from Jackson. In many respects the two were very similar. Barnum had a rare gift for publicity. His spectacular museum in New York drew the public in the thousands and he became rich by entertaining them. Like Barnum, Selfridge had the ability to suspend disbelief. His tricks—entertaining people in a great store that was, in a way, just like a circus tent—created such confidence among his friends, family and financial backers that for years they refused to accept that his extravagant, destructive side was gradually eroding his ability to run his business empire.

All that lay ahead. At the age of ten, Harry started to earn cash in the time-honored way, by delivering newspapers. Next he took over a bread, and finally he took a holiday job at Leonard Field's dry-goods store where he stocked shelves and carried parcels for $1.50 a week—cash he promptly handed over to his mother. When he was thirteen, he and a school friend, Peter Loomis, produced a boy's monthly magazine called Will o' the Wisp. Harry threw himself into the magazine, hustling for advertising from local tradesmen and promising them a "guaranteed circulation from all the boys at school." Years later, Loomis recalled that "Harry sold space to a local dentist who owed us 75 cents. When he didn't pay up, Harry got him to extract a troublesome tooth for free to square the debt." His experience of publishing Wisp not only gave Harry a lifelong passion for the business of publicity and promotion, but also introduced him to the power of the press—something he never forgot and which he played to his advantage throughout his career.

Loomis's father ran a small bank in Jackson, and when Harry left school at fourteen, he got a job there as a junior bookkeeper, earning twenty dollars a month. A tough taskmaster named Mr. Potter taught him to write a neat ledger, as Harry later recalled in a letter to Loomis: "He didn't exactly inspire or encourage, but he did rub things in so hard that you could never forget them." Jotting down figures became an ingrained habit, and Harry's lists make fascinating reading. In just one of his silver-clasped, cream vellum private ledgers dated 1921, he noted in an immaculate hand that on June 3 he lost £1,198 playing poker and gave "the Hon. Angela Manners £5.5/-" (presumably a charity donation), while in July—somewhat mysteriously for a man who owned his own department store—he spent £476 17s. 6d. at the Irish Linen Company in the Burlington Arcade.

It has been said that at around this time Harry studied for the entrance examinations to the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, but failed his physical test because he was too short. Harry was always sensitive about his height—he was a shade under five feet eight inches and wore lifts in his custom-made boots to give him an extra half inch—but that fact alone wouldn't have prevented him joining the navy, for they required only that candidates "be not less than five feet." It is more likely that he would have failed because of his eyesight. He was notoriously farsighted, and as a consequence wore glasses for all reading and writing, initially a metal-rimmed pince-nez and later thin gold frames. He had the most brilliant, clear blue eyes and would fix people with a beguiling stare that could be disconcerting to those who didn't realize that he could hardly see them otherwise.

Harry soon left the bank and moved to Gilbert, Ransom & Knapp, a local furniture factory, where he became a bookkeeper. Unfortunately, the business was already waning and went into liquidation a few months later. Being unemployed wasn't an option, so he took work at a dollar a day in an insurance business in Big Rapids, a small town several hundred miles away.

Whatever influences inspired Harry Selfridge in his quest to create a seductive shopping experience, he

certainly didn’t find them in Big Rapids. He was never a fan of country pursuits, and fishing and fur trapping were pretty much all Big Rapids offered by way of recreation in those days. Neither did he drink much. What Harry enjoyed was playing cards—especially poker—and Big Rapids was almost certainly where he honed his game. At one point, boredom is rumored to have prompted him to study law—via a correspondence course—but he subsequently admitted that it was a “complete disaster.” In one thing, however, he remained constant. In the office he was always impeccably dressed. Years later, when Selfridge had become famous and the American press serialized his life story, an old acquaintance from Big Rapids recalled that Harry always looked “as if he had just come out of a bandbox.”

Harry Selfridge returned to Jackson late in 1876 with five hundred dollars he had “saved from his earnings,” although given his predilection for poker, it was more likely to have been the winnings from a few lucky hands at cards. He then drifted from one dreary job to another, culminating in eighteen months at a local grocery store. By the time he was twenty-two, he was desperate to move on. But how—and to where? Salvation came through his ex-employer, Leonard Field, who was persuaded to write a letter of introduction to Marshall Field in Chicago. Marshall was the senior partner in Field, Leiter & Co., one of the biggest and most successful stores in the city. Young Harry would ultimately help make it one of the most famous in America.

Selfridge used to say that his interview with Mr. Field lasted a matter of minutes and that the man was “so cold it made him shiver.” Terms were discussed, with Harry claiming he agreed to a weekly wage of ten dollars as a stock boy in the wholesale department basement—but the pay at the very bottom of the ladder he determined to climb was certainly less than that.

Variously described as “dignified and quiet,” and so taciturn he was nicknamed “silent Marsh,” Field had little time for anything other than work. How a man so devoid of personality could have been so successful in the business of sales, where the ability to communicate and motivate is crucial, is a mystery. Field cared little for what he called “frivolous methods,” running his business the way he lived his life. Dry, humorless and puritanical, albeit always courteous, he was the antithesis of Harry Selfridge. They complemented one another, but although Selfridge worked for Field for over twenty-five years, they were never friends.

To call Marshall Field merely “successful” is an understatement. By 1900, his recorded annual income was $40 million a year (nearly $800 million today), and when he died in 1906, he left an estate worth $118 million (over $2 billion today). A large part of his fortune came from real estate and his early investment in railroad stocks. He was also an original and significant investor in the Pullman Company, backing George Pullman’s imaginative concept of luxurious comfort while traveling by train. Given that the journey from Chicago to New York alone took twenty hours, it is small wonder that Pullman’s deluxe dining car, called “the Delmonico” after New York’s swell restaurant, was so successful. Only the rich could travel in his cars, while the really rich bought and customized their own private Pullman carriages—the private jets of their day—fitting marble bathtubs, overstuffed velvet sofas, piped organ music and, the height of one-upmanship, taking along an English butler to ensure the service was smooth.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Alyssa Lewis:

What do you think about book? It is just for students since they're still students or this for all people in the world, what the best subject for that? Only you can be answered for that concern above. Every person has various personality and hobby for every single other. Don't to be compelled someone or something that they don't wish do that. You must know how great and also important the book Shopping, Seduction & Mr Selfridge. All type of book are you able to see on many solutions. You can look for the internet resources or

other social media.

David Hedges:

Now a day those who Living in the era wherever everything reachable by connect with the internet and the resources within it can be true or not call for people to be aware of each facts they get. How a lot more to be smart in having any information nowadays? Of course the answer is reading a book. Looking at a book can help individuals out of this uncertainty Information specifically this Shopping, Seduction & Mr Selfridge book as this book offers you rich information and knowledge. Of course the data in this book hundred pct guarantees there is no doubt in it you may already know.

Connie Medina:

The guide untitled Shopping, Seduction & Mr Selfridge is the book that recommended to you to see. You can see the quality of the e-book content that will be shown to you actually. The language that article author use to explained their way of doing something is easily to understand. The author was did a lot of research when write the book, to ensure the information that they share to you is absolutely accurate. You also could possibly get the e-book of Shopping, Seduction & Mr Selfridge from the publisher to make you far more enjoy free time.

Phyllis Smith:

In this age globalization it is important to someone to find information. The information will make you to definitely understand the condition of the world. The healthiness of the world makes the information better to share. You can find a lot of recommendations to get information example: internet, classifieds, book, and soon. You can view that now, a lot of publisher that will print many kinds of book. The actual book that recommended for you is Shopping, Seduction & Mr Selfridge this book consist a lot of the information with the condition of this world now. This book was represented so why is the world has grown up. The language styles that writer use for explain it is easy to understand. The writer made some exploration when he makes this book. This is why this book appropriate all of you.

Read Shopping, Seduction & Mr Selfridge By Lindy Woodhead for online ebook

Shopping, Seduction & Mr Selfridge By Lindy Woodhead Free PDF d0wnl0ad, audio books, books to read, good books to read, cheap books, good books, online books, books online, book reviews epub, read books online, books to read online, online library, greatbooks to read, PDF best books to read, top books to read Shopping, Seduction & Mr Selfridge By Lindy Woodhead books to read online.

Online Shopping, Seduction & Mr Selfridge By Lindy Woodhead ebook PDF download

Shopping, Seduction & Mr Selfridge By Lindy Woodhead Doc

Shopping, Seduction & Mr Selfridge By Lindy Woodhead Mobipocket

Shopping, Seduction & Mr Selfridge By Lindy Woodhead EPub