

**JOHN WANAMAKER; THE RECORD  
OF A CITIZENS' CELEBRATION TO  
MARK HIS SIXTY YEARS CAREER  
AS MERCHANT, APRIL, 1861-  
APRIL, 1921**

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John Wanamaker; The Record of a Citizens' Celebration to Mark His Sixty Years Career as Merchant, April, 1861-April, 1921 by Various

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**VARIOUS**

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*John Rauamata*

Philadelphia. Citizens.

# John Wanamaker

The Record of a Citizens' Celebration  
To Mark His Sixty Years  
Career as Merchant

April, 1861—April, 1921

*Philadelphia*  
*Printed for the Committee*  
*Nineteen-Twenty-one*

Copy 2

**E**ARLY IN THE YEAR 1921, when it was realized that during the coming April, John Wanamaker would celebrate his sixtieth anniversary as a merchant, a number of his friends and admirers determined to testify their appreciation of, and faith in, a Philadelphian, who had wrought so well for his native city and made for himself such a record of integrity, civic helpfulness and brilliant business success.

Mr. Wanamaker began life without rich or influential support, and it is but the barest truth to say that all that he achieved was due to his own energy, honesty and intellect. When he entered on his career as merchant, sixty years ago (April 8, 1861) at "Oak Hall", Sixth and Market Streets, he had little or nothing to aid him but his own spirit of enterprise, and that remarkable gift of vision which has so often enabled him to look into the book of the future and read therein the destined greatness of America. Some of his best friends and well-wishers prophesied that the young clothing merchant would fail, and there seemed good ground for this prediction. But John Wanamaker, with his wonderful capacity for hard work, and that splendid enthusiasm which the lapse of time has never destroyed, went serenely ahead and made for himself, within a few years, an important place in the community.

In 1876, the year of the Centennial Exhibition, Mr. Wanamaker moved into the "Grand Depot" at Thirteenth and Market Streets, (a rehabilitation of the old Pennsylvania general freight depot, where Moody and Sankey had recently appeared); and early in 1877, before this venture was a year old, he inaugurated the "New Kind of Store", when he added to the regular retail clothing business a finely equipped dry goods store. People were amazed at such seeming "audacity", and again some predicted failure, but starting with that place as a foundation he gradually developed and built up the great "Wanamaker Store", which now occupies all the ground between Chestnut and Market and Thirteenth and Juniper Streets, and which has been so well described as "one of the wonders" of America.

The Wanamaker Store of today, the lineal descendant of the infant enterprise born at Sixth and Market Streets, sixty years ago, is the best monument to the commercial greatness of John Wanamaker and to that gift of vision which has made him see where others have been blind. It might be written for him, as was written for Sir Christopher Wren: "If you want to see my monument, look around you." For such is a free translation of the Latin tablet erected in St. Paul's, London, in honor of the great architect of the Cathedral.

Americans honor John Wanamaker not only as a merchant prince and as a dreamer who has transformed his dreams into brick and iron and marble, but also as one who has worked steadily for the benefit of his fellow man. As a public-spirited citizen, as a Cabinet officer—who can ever forget his brilliant service as Postmaster-General of the United States?—and as the creator and inspirer of Bethany Church and Sunday-school, we praise him. Furthermore, we honor him for his relation to his employees, in whom he has always had such a friendly and practical interest, and for the unostentatious manner in which he has so often gone out of his way to do kindly acts or stretch out a hand to many who have fallen along the wayside.

It would be a truism to say that the life of Mr. Wanamaker has been an extraordinary one, yet the fact remains that no better adjective can be used in describing its development from his boyhood days near Gray's Ferry Road until the present time. As we think of it we are mindful of that line from Holy Writ which Benjamin Franklin's father often quoted to him, and which has its own bearing on John Wanamaker:

"Seest Thou a Man Diligent in His Calling, He Shall  
Stand Before Kings."

Thoughts like these in the minds of certain Philadelphians, including the Mayor, gave rise to the following letter, copies of which were sent out to many prominent citizens in various walks of life:



April 8, 1921

DEAR SIR:

The career of John Wanamaker as citizen and merchant at the close of sixty years in active business, has been so conspicuous as to induce a group of his fellow citizens to suggest a testimonial which will take the form of a luncheon, at the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel, Philadelphia, Tuesday, April 26th, at twelve-thirty o'clock.

The accompanying correspondence discloses the thought and purpose underlying the movement. Such an event must necessarily attract the interest of Philadelphia's foremost citizens and of the legion of Mr. Wanamaker's admirers elsewhere.

The attendance at the dinner, which must be limited owing to the capacity of the hall, will be by subscription. The rate has been fixed at ten dollars per plate and subscriptions will be entered in the order of their receipt. If you desire to participate in this unusual Philadelphia event, kindly forward your acceptance and subscription to Edward Robins, Secretary-Treasurer, Mayor's Office, City Hall, Philadelphia.

Very truly yours,

J. HAMPTON MOORE

*Chairman*

WILLIAM C. SPROUL  
EDWIN S. STUART  
ROBERT VON MOSCHZISKER  
ALBA B. JOHNSON  
SAMUEL REA  
LEVI L. RUE

WILLIAM POTTER  
GEORGE WILKINSON PEPPER  
JOSIAH H. PENNIMAN  
SAMUEL M. VAUCLAIN  
AGNEW T. DICE  
JOSEPH M. STEELE

*Committee*

The correspondence referred to in the letter is appended:

March 23, 1921

HON. JOHN WANAMAKER,  
City Hall Square,  
Philadelphia, Pa.

DEAR MR. WANAMAKER:

We note with great interest that April 8th, next, will mark the Sixtieth Anniversary of your entrance into mercantile business in this city. Your career as merchant, Cabinet officer and public-spirited citizen has been distinguished by such signal success and integrity that we feel it would be appropriate to make acknowledgment of it in some way, and the thought has suggested itself to us that you might consent to meet a number of your friends and well-wishers at luncheon or dinner any day next month agreeable to you. May we ask your favorable consideration of this suggestion? We feel that this would be a proper way to observe the close of so wonderful a span of human activity, during which you have worked steadily for the public good and contributed materially to the commercial prosperity of our country.

Trusting we may have an affirmative answer from you at your convenience, we have the honor to be,

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed by the Committee)

March 31, 1921

HON. J. HAMPTON MOORE,  
Mayor of Philadelphia,  
City Hall.

MY DEAR MAYOR MOORE:

I received your letter of March 29th, with its enclosure of March 23d, in New York yesterday, and have brought the letter with me to Philadelphia, in order that I might have time for consideration of the wonderful invitation of yourself and your compatriots.

I have decided, if it is agreeable to you, to accept this splendid invitation for my Father, as I believe in his traveling from point to point in his boat in the South, it would be difficult to reach him, and have his reply in time to be convenient for you to make your arrangements.

With great esteem, high regard and deepest appreciation to you and the signers of the invitation, I am,

Yours very sincerely,

RODMAN WANAMAKER

The circular of the Committee found immediate response, subscriptions coming in by every mail, so that preparations for the luncheon began at once under the active supervision of the Mayor. The latter invited a number of distinguished persons to be guests of the Committee, including the President of the United States and members of his Cabinet, Senators Penrose and Knox, and others, and while it was impossible for some of them to attend, those who had to decline sent letters of sincere regret and of appreciation and goodwill towards John Wanamaker. Among the special guests who could come were His Eminence, Cardinal Dougherty, Hon. John F. Hylan, Mayor of New York, Hon. James M. Beck, Senator Walter E. Edge of New Jersey, Edward T. Stotesbury, Rodman Wanamaker, Bishop Joseph F. Berry, Police Commissioner Enright, of New York, Captain Louis M. Nulton, U. S. N., and the Rev. Dr. Joseph Krauskopf.

On Tuesday, April 26th, the day arranged for the luncheon, the members of the Committee met in the Mayor's Office in City Hall, shortly before noon, and proceeded to the Wanamaker Store. Here the Mayor waited upon Mr. Wanamaker, and the whole party taking automobiles, under convoy of mounted police, escorted the guest of the day down Market Street to Sixth, where he had a glimpse of "Oak Hall", the corner-stone of his business career. The