The History of S&H Green Stamps

America’s First Great Loyalty Rewards Revolution


GREEN STAMPS
QUICK SAVER BOOK
THE SPERRY AND HUTCHINSON COMPANY
WHEN THIS PAGE IS FILLED, YOU WILL HAVE COMPLETED ½ OF THE BOOK


SPERRY AND HUTCHINSON
652GN
VALUE 2/8 STAMPS
ESTABLISHED 1896


WE GIVE
S&H
GREEN STAMPS
SAVE!
Join the 20 million smart, thrifty women who shop where they receive S&H Green Stamps. Over 60,000 stores of all types give them!
Actually, 4 out of 5 women who save stamps save S&H Green Stamps.
Samsonite
FLINT
REVERE

For much of the 20th century, especially from the 1930s through the 1970s, American shoppers lived in a world where buying groceries, gas, or household goods came with a surprising bonus: **tiny green stamps that could eventually be traded for merchandise**.

These were **S&H Green Stamps**, produced by the Sperry & Hutchinson Company. At their peak, they were so widespread that Americans collected **billions of stamps every week**, often pasting them into booklets at kitchen tables after dinner.

But Green Stamps weren't just a quirky shopping perk—they were the foundation of what we now call **customer loyalty programs**.

🏛️ **Origins: How Green Stamps Began (1896)**

"S. & H." Green Trading Stamps

That it pays to collect them;
That it pays to Trade where they are given; we ask you to be the judge



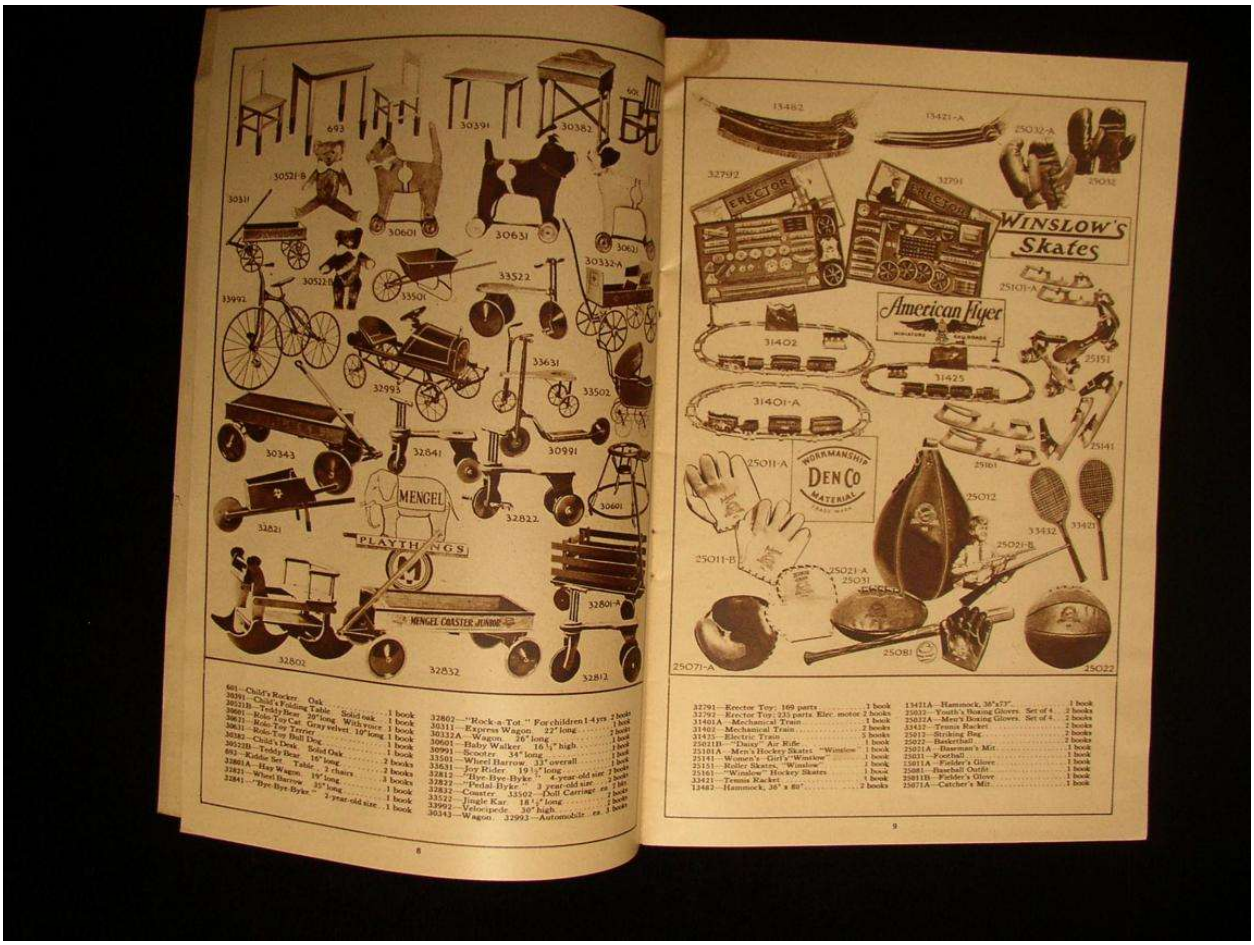
An interior view of one of our New York show rooms

Every item shown in this picture is a premium which will be given FREE for

"S. & H." Green Trading Stamps

The merchant can well afford them because of the greatly increased business their use insures.

THE SPERRY & HUTCHINSON COMPANY
THOS. A. SPERRY, President
Home Office, New York City, N. Y.



601—Child's Rocker. Oak ..... 1 book
30391—Child's Folding Table ..... 1 book
30601—Teddy Bear. 20" long. Solid oak ..... 1 book
30631—Ride-Toy Cat. Gray velvet. With voice 1 book
30611—Ride-Toy Terrier ..... 1 book
30332—Ride-Toy Bull Dog ..... 1 book
30522B—Child's Desk. Solid Oak ..... 1 book
692—Riddle Set. Table. 16" long ..... 2 books
33601A—Hap Wagon. 2 chairs ..... 2 books
32821—Wheel Barrow. 19" long ..... 3 books
32841—"Bye-Bye-Byke." 2-year-old size. 1 book

32802—"Rock-a-Tot." For children 1-4 yrs 2 books
30311—Express Wagon. 22" long ..... 1 book
30332A—Wagon. 26" long ..... 2 books
30601—Baby Walker. 16½" high ..... 1 book
30991—Scooter. 34" long ..... 1 book
33501—Wheel Barrow. 33" overall ..... 1 book
33631—Joy Rider. 19½" long ..... 2 books
32812—"Bye-Bye-Byke." 4-year-old size 2 books
32822—"Pedal-Byke." 3-year-old size. 2 bks.
32832—Coaster. 33502—Doll Carriage ea. 1 book
33522—Jingle Kar. 18½" long ..... 1 book
32992—Velocipede. 36" high ..... 1 book
30343—Wagon. 32992—Automobile ea. 1 books

32791—Erector Toy: 169 parts ..... 1 book
32792—Erector Toy: 235 parts. Elec. motor 2 books
31401A—Mechanical Train ..... 1 book
31402—Mechanical Train ..... 2 books
31425—Electric Train ..... 2 books
25021B—"Daisy" Air Rifle ..... 1 book
25101A—Men's Hockey Skates. "Winslow" 1 book
25141—Women's—Girl's "Winslow" ..... 1 book
25151—Roller Skates. "Winslow" ..... 1 book
25161—"Winslow" Hockey Skates ..... 1 book
33421—Tennis Racket ..... 1 book
13482—Hammock, 36" x 80" ..... 2 books

13411A—Hammock, 36"x73" ..... 1 book
25032—Youth's Boxing Gloves. Set of 4. 2 books
25012A—Men's Boxing Gloves. Set of 4. 2 books
33432—Tennis Racket ..... 2 books
25012—Striking Bag ..... 2 books
25022—Basketball ..... 2 books
25021A—Baseman's Mit ..... 1 book
25031—Football ..... 1 book
25011A—Fielder's Glove ..... 1 book
25081—Baseball Outfit ..... 1 book
25011B—Fielder's Glove ..... 1 book
25071A—Catcher's Mit ..... 1 book



4

The story begins in **1896**, when entrepreneurs **Thomas Sperry** and **Shelley Byron Hutchinson** created the **Sperry & Hutchinson Company (S&H)**.

Their idea was simple but revolutionary:

- Stores would buy stamps from S&H
- Stores would give those stamps to customers based on purchases
- Customers would save stamps in books
- Filled books could be redeemed for merchandise

At first, it was marketed as a **“thank-you reward system”** for loyal customers.

By the early 1900s, S&H had already built redemption centers where customers could exchange stamp books for items like:

- Lamps
- Kitchenware
- Furniture
- Tools
- Toys

This was one of the earliest structured retail reward systems in the United States.

📈 The Rise: Why Green Stamps Exploded (1930s–1960s)


6 6
5 5
PRODUCE
EDWARDS
Lucerne
Lucerne


SPERRY AND HUTCHINSON
S&H
DISCOUNT FOR CASH
VALUE 1 MILL
that
s offer
andise...
FILL THIS PAGE WITH 30 S&H GREEN STAMPS
S&H GREEN STAMPS
REDEMPTION STORE
...they also know that with the added value of S&H Green Stamps Distinguished Merchandise they're
DOLLARS AHEAD!
FILL THIS PAGE WITH 30 S&H GREEN STAMPS
5



4

Although the company existed earlier, **Green Stamps truly exploded in popularity during the mid-20th century**.

By the 1950s and 1960s:

- Nearly every supermarket, gas station, and department store offered them
- Customers received stamps based on how much they spent
- “Double stamp days” became major promotional events
- Entire families participated in saving and pasting stamps

Why they were so successful

Green Stamps worked because they hit several psychological triggers:

1. **Reward anticipation** – saving toward something felt exciting
2. **Household participation** – kids often helped paste stamps

3. **Visible progress** – filled books showed “earned value”
4. **Competition among stores** – businesses used more stamps to attract customers

At their peak, S&H reportedly issued **more stamps than the U.S. Postal Service**.

📘 How the System Worked


Stamp
SAVER BOOK
fine gifts
for father...
paste One
S&H 50 here
OR
DISCOUNT FOR CASH
DO NOT MIX STAMPS
QUICK
SAVER
BOOK





MRS. LEWIS B. CROWELL in her attractive home in East Aurora, a suburb of Buffalo, which contains many gifts obtained with S&H Green Stamps. With her are Christopher, William and Robert. The Crowells have 3 other children—Tucker, Wendy and Judy. Mr. Crowell is a General Production Manager of a building materials concern.

"I'm dollars ahead—thanks to S&H Green Stamps"

says **MRS. LEWIS B. CROWELL,** *Buffalo housewife*

—AND OVER 27,000,000 SMART, THRIFTY WOMEN AGREE . . .



As Mrs. Crowell says about her own experiences with S&H, "Whenever I shop at Hens & Kelly Department Stores and other fine stores that give S&H Green Stamps I know I'm dollars ahead. First, I'm dollars ahead because these stores give fine values. And I'm dollars ahead again when I redeem S&H Green Stamps for lovely gifts."

S&H, you know, is America's oldest, most reliable stamp plan. It's the overwhelming favorite because women learned long ago that with S&H Green Stamps you get what you want when you want it. Your choice of over 1500 gifts made by the finest companies in America.

Good Housekeeping Guarantees Performance of America's Only Nationwide Stamp Plan

SINCE 1896 S&H GREEN STAMPS

You can be dollars ahead too! Shop where you get S&H Green Stamps.

COPYRIGHT 1959 THE SPERRY AND HUTCHINSON CO.

5

The system was both simple and strangely labor-intensive:

1. Earn stamps at checkout

You received stamp "sheets" based on spending—often something like 1 stamp per 10 cents or per dollar.

2. Paste them into books

Customers licked and pasted stamps into official booklets provided by S&H.

- Each book held a fixed number of stamps
- Pages had printed guides showing where to paste them

3. Redeem for merchandise

Once books were filled, they could be exchanged for:

- Kitchen appliances
- Furniture
- Radios and TVs
- Toys
- Home décor
- Tools

Redemption centers and catalogs made it feel like a **mini department store funded by your grocery bill**.

🏪 The Culture of Green Stamps







4

For millions of families, Green Stamps became a **weekly ritual**.

- Children often helped “earn” rewards by pasting stamps
- Families saved stamp books in shoeboxes or drawers
- Redemption trips felt like “free shopping days”
- Catalog browsing was similar to modern online shopping carts

For lower- and middle-income households, it was also a way to gradually acquire household goods without direct cash payment.

⚖️ Competition and Copycats

By the 1960s and 1970s, S&H wasn't alone. Many competitors emerged:

- Blue Chip Stamps
- Top Value Stamps
- Gold Bond Stamps
- Plaid Stamps
- Greenbax Stamps

Retailers often switched programs or ran multiple systems. This led to a **flood of overlapping loyalty programs**, all competing for shopper attention.

📉 The Decline: Why Green Stamps Disappeared



CASHBACK

1.Item Cost $100
2.$100 charged to card
3.Receives $5 by end of month (assuming 5% cashback)

PROS

- Little effort needed
- Hassle-free

CONS

- Cashbacks amount Capped
- Requirements. to meet max Cashback

CASH REBATE

1.Item Cost $100
2.$100 charged to card
3.Receives $5 Rebate, "Stored in credit (assuming 5% cashback

PROS

- Hassle-free

CONS

- Need to Monitor amount accumulated.

AIR MILES

1.Item Cost $100
2.$100 charged to card
3.Miles Credited to Frequent Flier membership

PROS

- Value of miles usually Higher than cashback usually no cap limit

CONS

- Miles Rate Changes
- Can only redeem travel-related items
- Expiry date

REWARDS

1.Item Cost $100
2.$100 charged to card
3.Receives $5 by end of month (assuming 5% cashback)

PROS

Rewards credited to card account.

CONS

- Can only redeem at merchant partners. Expiry date



4

By the late 1970s and 1980s, Green Stamps began fading quickly.

1. Inflation

Merchandise became more expensive, requiring **more and more stamps** to redeem anything meaningful.

2. Retail costs

Stores had to purchase stamps from S&H, making the system less attractive.

3. Credit cards changed everything

With the rise of:

- Bank cards
- Mastercard and Visa
- Store-specific credit accounts

Retailers could now track spending digitally and reward customers directly.

4. Administrative burden

Stamp redemption was slow, manual, and expensive compared to modern systems.

5. Changing consumer expectations

By the 1980s, people preferred:

- Instant discounts
- Cashback
- Automatic points systems

🧻 The Final Years

S&H attempted to modernize by introducing:

- “Greenpoints” (digital rewards)
- Online redemption systems

But the nostalgic paper-stamp system never recovered.

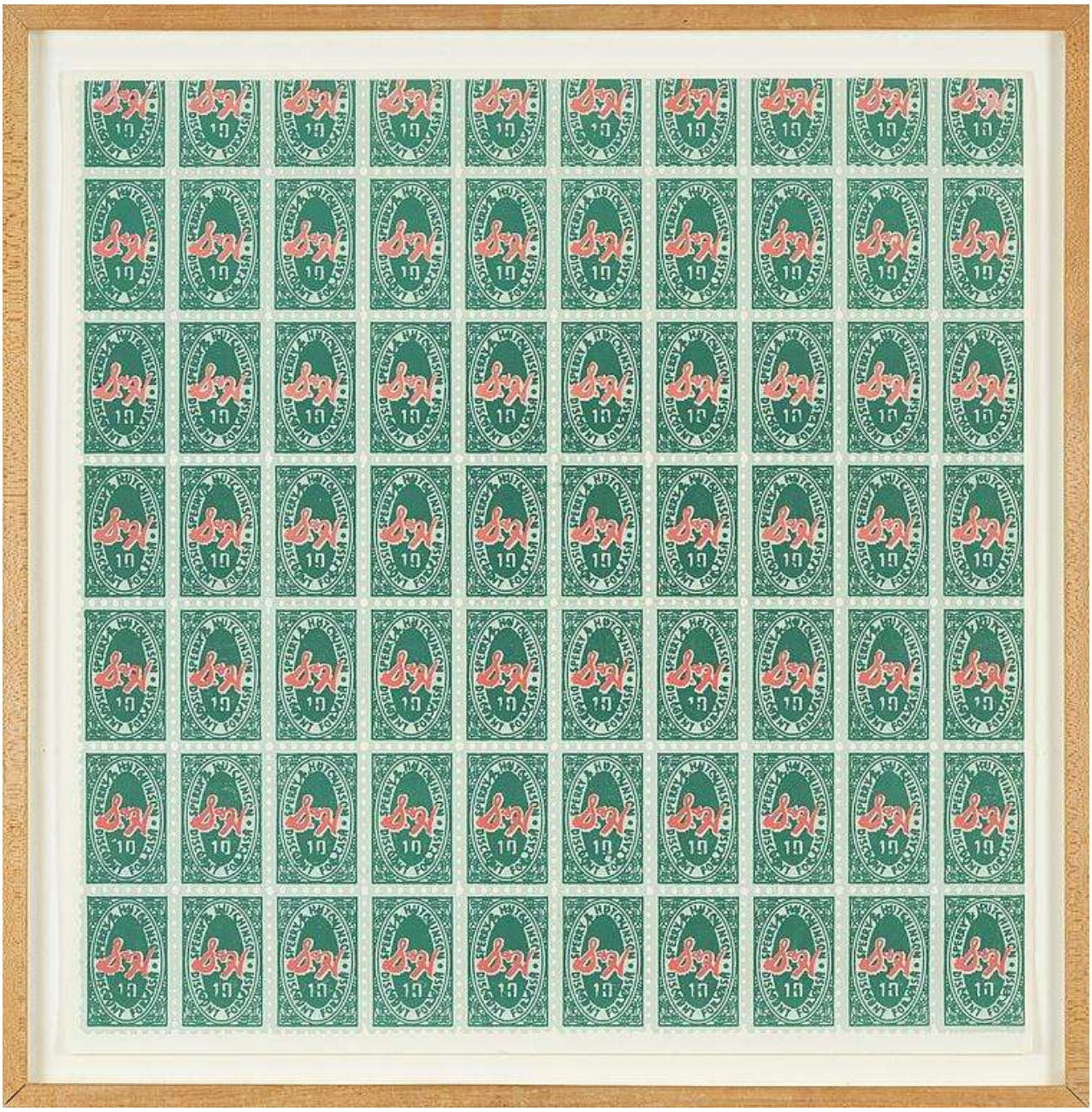
- Physical stamp redemption effectively ended in the late 1980s
- The company’s modern versions struggled for years
- The legacy S&H program was eventually discontinued in the 2000s and 2010s era restructuring

Eventually, the Green Stamp system was fully retired, closing a nearly century-long chapter in American retail history.

🧠 Legacy: Why Green Stamps Still Matter Today


1:58
GAP
OLD NAVY
ATHLETA
MY GAP
Compare rewards
Chase Sapphire Preferred® Credit Card
***9012
SAPPHIRE
PREFERRED
VISA
Signature
VENTURE
Card rewards
2% cashback
Online shopping
Reward you may earn based on the store category
3% points
Travel
3% points
Gas stations
1% points
Everywhere
Select card


9:41
THE MARKET
Hi,
Samantha!
1,000 currency
25 currency expiring: 09/12
23
Clipped
Coupons
10
Added
Rewards
4 Rewards
Tropicana



7

Even though Green Stamps are gone, their influence is everywhere today.

Modern equivalents include:

- Credit card cashback rewards
- Airline miles
- Grocery loyalty apps

- Retail points systems (Target, Kroger, etc.)

In many ways, Green Stamps were the **prototype for every rewards system used today**.

Even pop culture recognized their importance—artists like **Andy Warhol** incorporated trading stamp imagery into pop art, turning them into symbols of consumer culture.

🧻 Conclusion

S&H Green Stamps began as a simple idea:
👉 reward customers for loyalty with small collectible stamps.

They evolved into a massive cultural phenomenon that:

- Changed how retailers competed
- Influenced consumer behavior
- Shaped modern loyalty programs
- Became a shared household ritual for millions of Americans

And while they disappeared with the rise of digital systems, their legacy is still in every "points earned" notification we see today.