

palm webOS

“the mobile platform that almost was...”

...or “when smart phones were the product – not the user”

Jon W



Palm, Inc founded in 1992, wrote software for the failed Casio/Tandy “Zoomer”

Bought by US Robotics in 1995

Launched PalmPilot 1000/5000 in 1996

Bought by 3COM in 1997

Original founders split to create Handspring in 1998.

Palm became independent entity again in 2000

Palm spun out PalmSource in 2002 to license and develop Palm OS, Handspring launches Treo 180

Merged with Handspring in 2003, as PalmOne, Inc.



2005 palmOne purchases the Palm trademark from PalmSource, rebrands as Palm, Inc once again.
ACCESS purchases PalmSource, owning the OS

2006 Palm releases Treo 600w, first Windows Mobile-powered Treo. Palm also acquires permanent, license-free rights to PalmOS from ACCESS.
Continues to experiment with form and function (eg: LifeDrive)

2007 Elevation Partners buys 25% of Palm in something of a rescue effort

2007 announces, then cancels the Folio...



The Folio was a Linux-based companion device, that tethered to your phone, giving you a bigger screen and more features. This would not be their last experiment with Linux, however

2008 Palm announces PDAs are dead, new mobile OS coming

Along with the investment from Elevation, Palm had some strategic new talent, include Jon Rubenstein, of Apple iPod fame

2009 Rubenstein becomes CEO, and Palm announces webOS and the Palm Pre at CES



By 2009, Palm's stock had fallen to \$3 / share, after the announcement, it skyrocketed to \$18 / share

Launched as a Sprint exclusive + initial quality issues and some constraints in the OS, by 2010, shares were back down to \$4



Between 2009 and 2010, Palm had released or announced for release the Pixi, Pre Plus, Pixi Plus, and Pre 2... but they were financially in trouble

By June 2010, HP had acquired Palm for \$1.2 Billion

In early 2011, HP announced webOS would be used as a “universal platform” across all its devices, including Printers and Smart TVs, as well as newly acquired phones other form factors



pre 2



veer



Pre 3

HP also announced the Veer and Pre3, alongside webOS 2.2



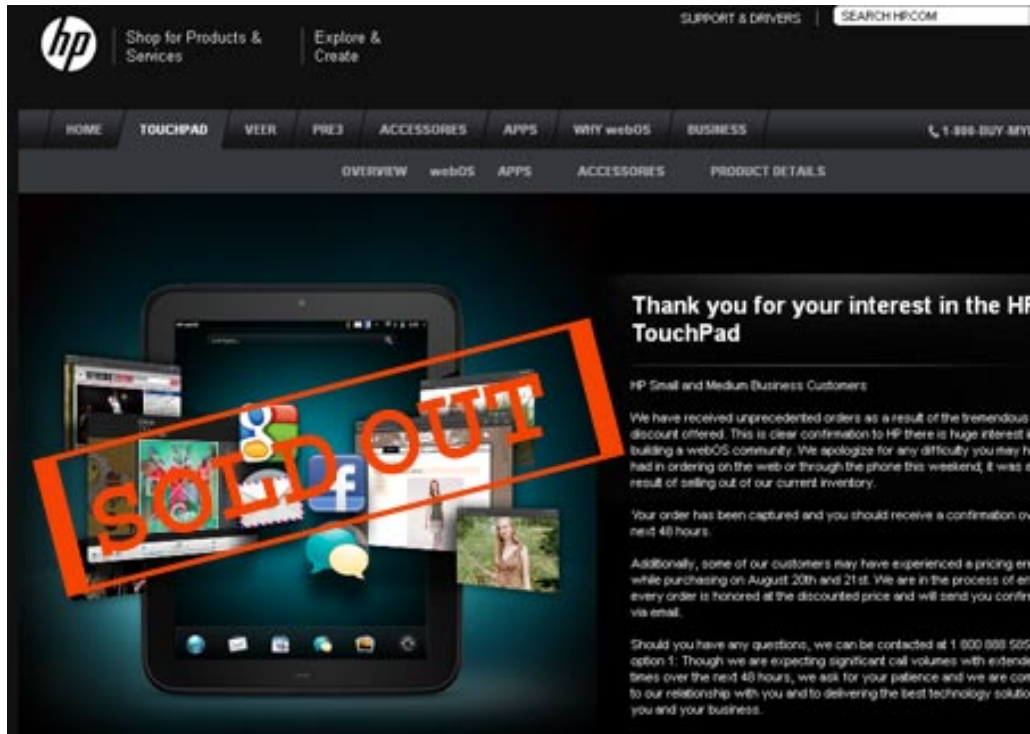
In 2011, HP announced webOS running inside Windows coming to all HP Computers by 2012

In July 2011, they also released the TouchPad. Intended as a competitor to the first gen iPad, but overshadowed by the iPad 2 launched earlier in the year



The TouchPad was an 8.9” tablet running webOS 3. Like other webOS devices, the TouchPad featured wireless charging, a Touch2Share feature introduced with webOS 2.0, and the line-up was to include a “4G” enabled version

Also in prototype was the “TouchPad Go” a 7” little brother to the TouchPad



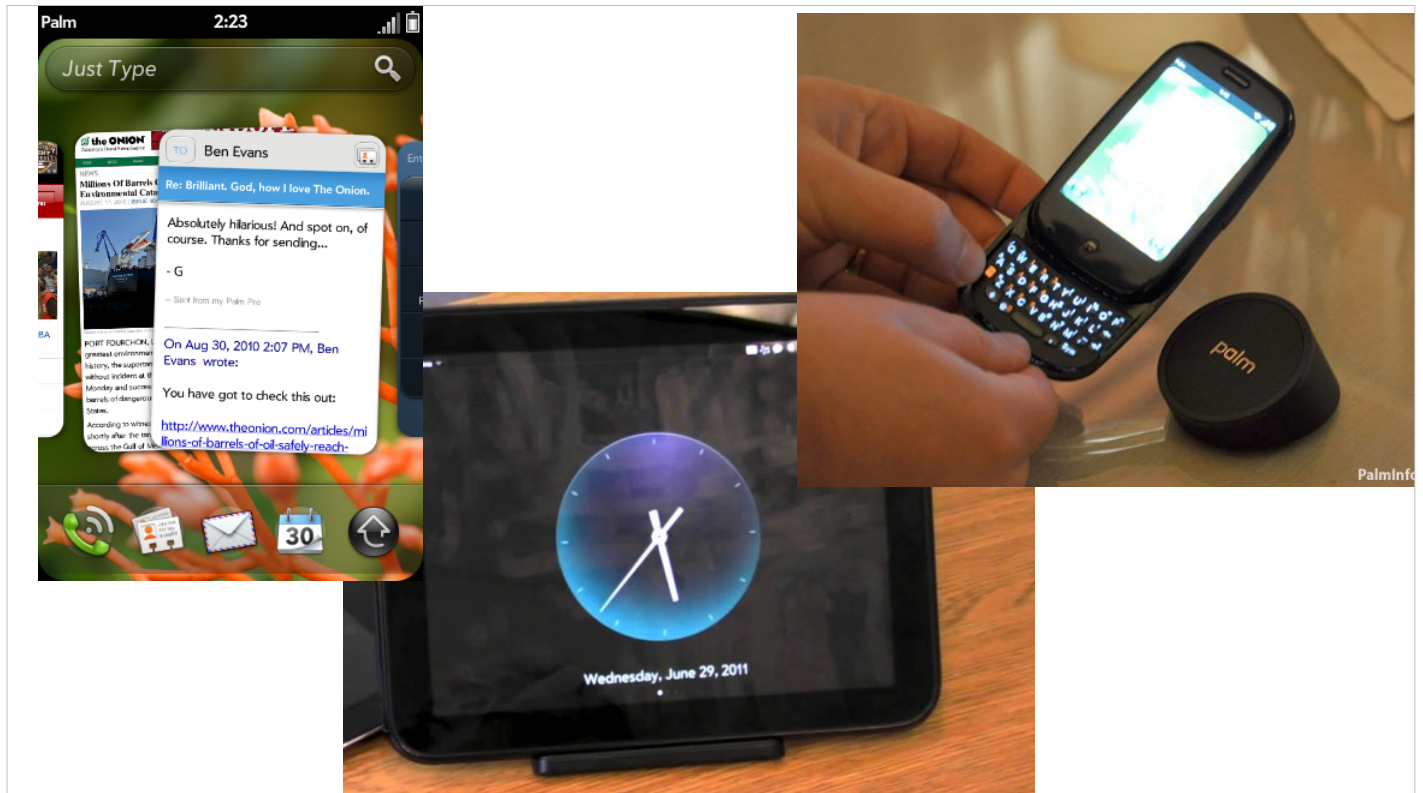
On August 18, 49 days after the US launch of the TouchPad, it was discontinued. Remaining stock was sold off in a firesale. Initially priced at \$499 for the 16GB model, sold for \$99. Just under 1 million TouchPads sold. Leadership change

Also in August, HP announced they were looking for a buyer for their Personal Systems Group

In December 2011, HP announced webOS was being Open Sourced

The last version of webOS, v3.0.5, was released in January 2012

February 2013, LG purchases webOS for use in their Smart TVs



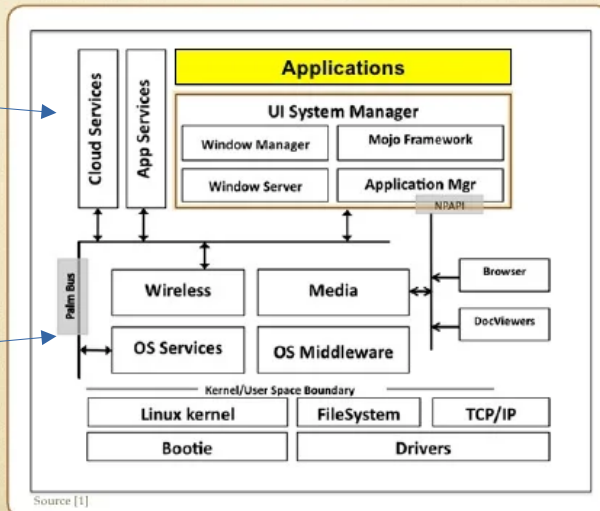
WebOS was launched and killed off in just slightly over 2 years. But its influence is still felt...

- card-based multi-tasking
- magnetically aligned wireless charging (MagSafe)
- Touch2Share (Namedrop)
- Exhibition mode (Standby Mode)
- Synergy: platform-integrated syncing (Files)
- Cross-platform app dev: PWAs, before there were PWAs

webOS Architecture

Web

Linux



The initial webOS Architecture was pure Linux, and pure web (with a WebKit rendering engine)

DBus was wrapped as the Luna Service Bus for inter-app/process communication

Background services were initially written in Java for webOS 1.0, but my 2.0 were replaced with NodeJS services

Most apps written in one of two Javascript frameworks – Mojo and later Enyo, both part of the SDK

Linux apps written in C++ with QT could easily be ported with the PDK



WebOS launched with an AppCatalog that initially had only 18 apps, growing to 30 apps with 1 million downloads by June of 2009. The Catalog included an emulator called Classic that could run PalmOS apps

After brief corporate reticence, Palm embraced the Homebrew community. It was easily unlocked, and its Linux under-pinnings made it simple to hack and develop on

By December 2011, when sunset, the AppCatalog had 10,002 apps in it – although many were pulled when the shutdown was announced

HP's AppCatalog servers were fully shutdown on March 15, 2015





Because HP had Open Sourced most of the Platform,
the Community stayed engaged

In 2013, the “webOS Ports” community had released
an update to the UI, called “LunaCE” (for Community
Edition – pronounced “lunacy”)



In 2014, the first release of “LuneOS” called Affogato combined bits from the open source with a re-write of the core UI in QT5, and WebKit2

30 subsequent releases, the latest in 2024, rebased on LG’s webOSE – the portions of webOS that LG continues to make open source

LuneOS initially ran on the TouchPad and Nexus 4, since ported to a wide array of devices, including the PineTab 2

WebOS apps written for Enyo are still supported (with some minor changes)

Community archival efforts have preserved 3851 of the 10,000+ apps originally available for the Platform. Most communication through the webOS Ports Wiki and webOS Nation Forums

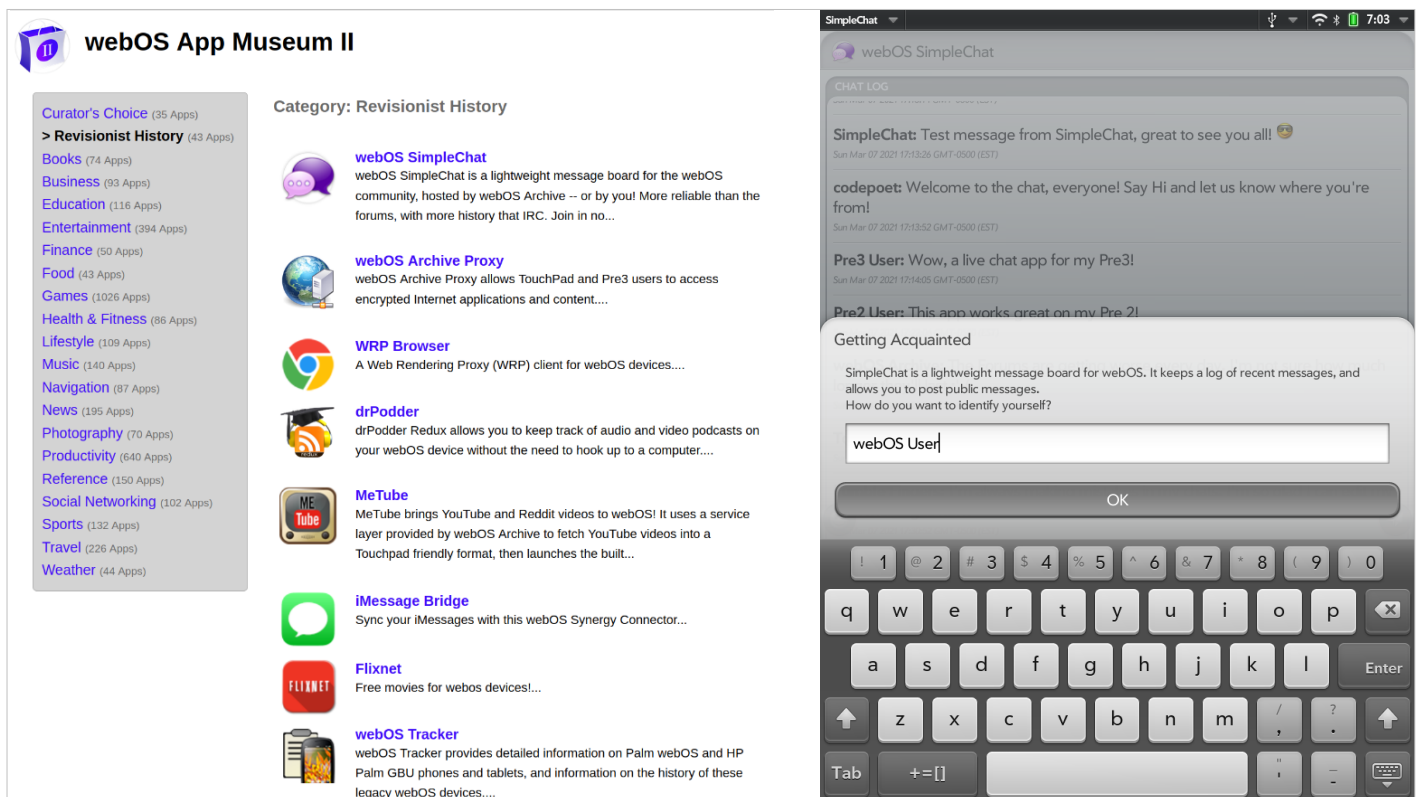


In 2018, I started learning to develop apps for webOS. I had moved to a role that didn't afford as much time in code, so I wanted to pick it up as a hobby

Assembling information from fractured archives was difficult, so I started pulling it together into a restored SDK

By early 2020, I was locked down like most other people, and suddenly had a lot more time on my hands...

With the help of the Community, I started pulling together archives from various users, and revisiting the "App Museum" – a browse-only view of the previous App Catalog contents, that could be linked to a FTP site

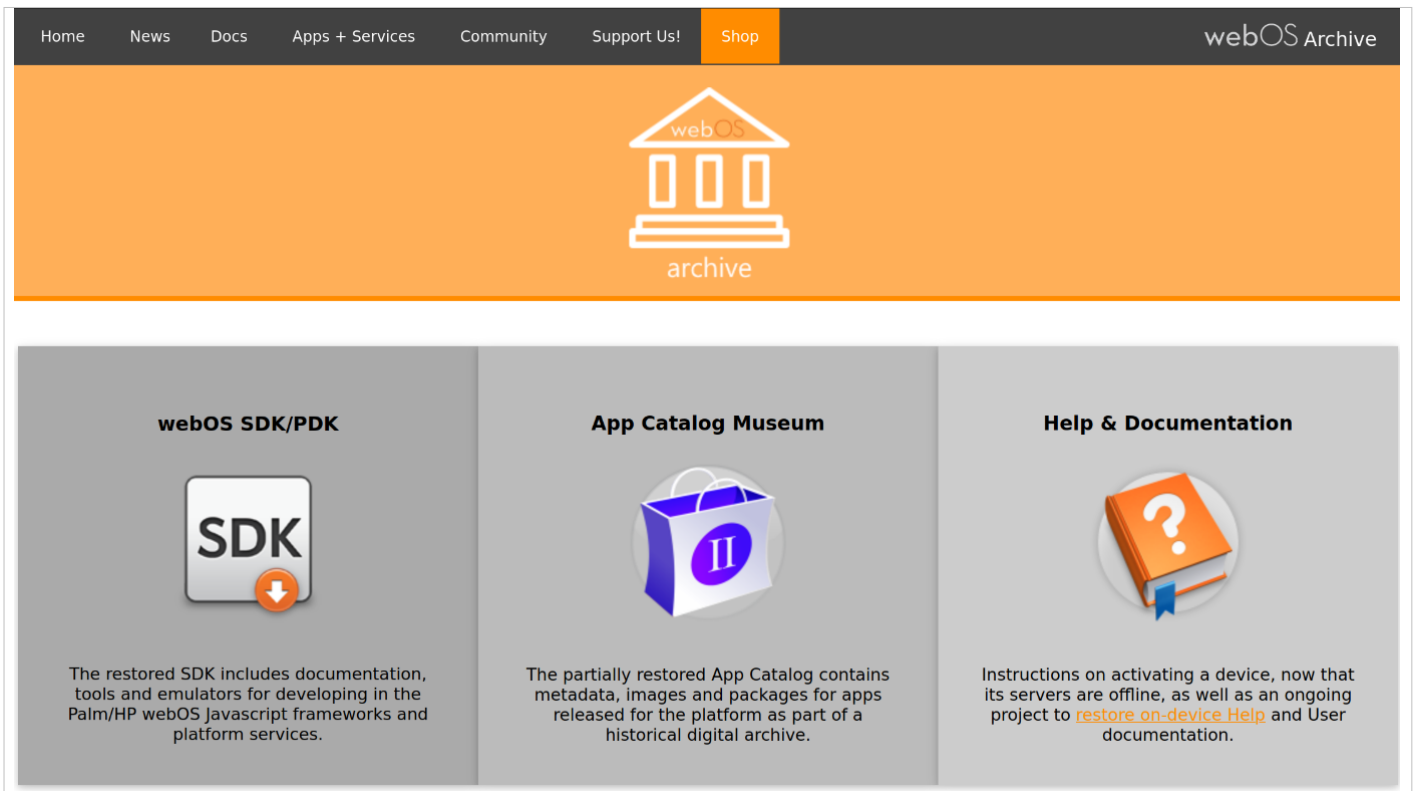


Since then, I've released more than 20 new apps, repaired a dozen more, and built new back-ends for Podcasts, Videos, File Sharing, Messaging and more

The hits don't stop coming for abandoned Platforms, though

In 2022, the Forums host shut down fairly abruptly. Most content had been archived (by the Community or Archive.org), but it was a devastating blow. We've re-assembled a good portion on a new Forum, and on Discord

The push toward HTTPS-only, and newer versions of TLS, cut us off from the Internet. Solutions have been found for later versions of webOS. Render a challenge – community browsers



Preservation efforts have been centered around webOS Archive – and related services, hosted by me or the community. Server space is paid for by donations

Legacy apps that still work are sometimes the best versions available right now. There's no data collection, ads or in-app-purchases. Tiger Woods Golf and Angry Birds are two of my favorites

New and repaired apps written in Enyo can easily be ported to other platforms. 100% of the code is portable, and just needs to be wrapped for other environments



Available in the consignment shop!



**Learn more at
www.webosarchive.org**