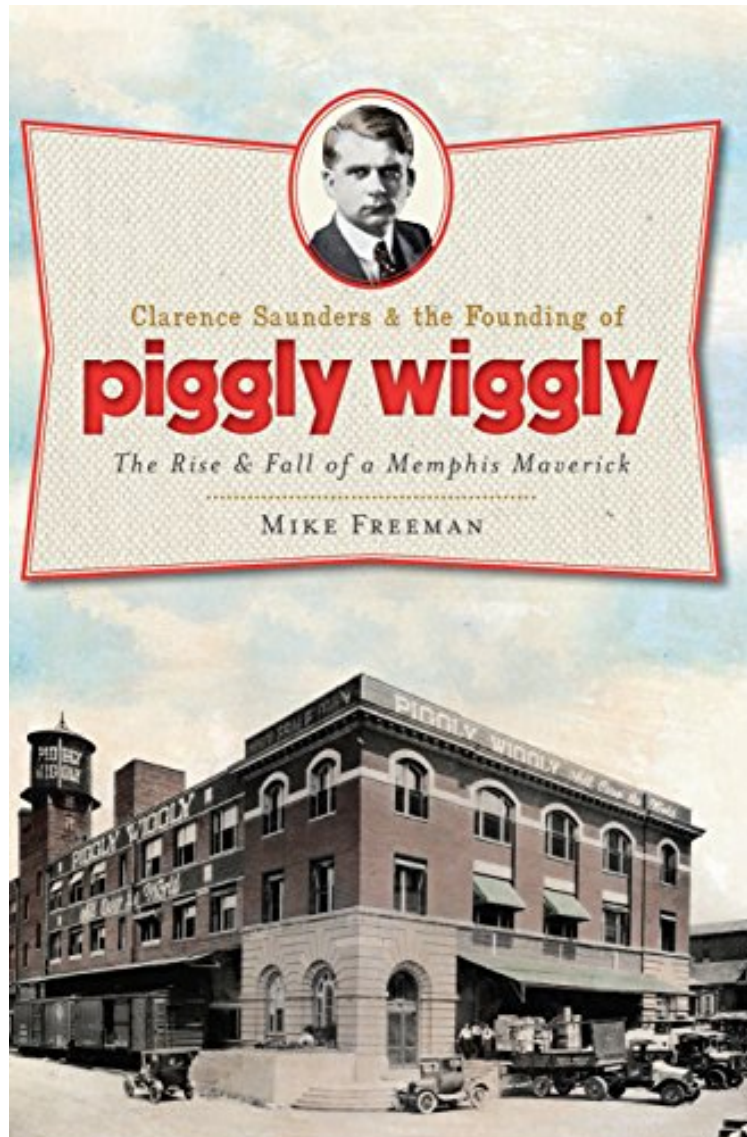


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Clarence Saunders and the Founding of Piggly Wiggly: The Rise Fall of a Memphis Maverick (Landmarks)

Mike Freeman

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Mike Freeman : Clarence Saunders and the Founding of Piggly Wiggly: The Rise Fall of a Memphis Maverick (Landmarks) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Clarence Saunders and the Founding of Piggly Wiggly: The Rise Fall of a Memphis Maverick (Landmarks):

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John Richard BorenA fascinating look at a very Trump-like character. The explanation of the financial details of his various difficulties was not well explained, and that's the only reason I didn't give it five stars. A great book for anyone who finds the stories of entrepreneurs interesting. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. If you are curious about Clarence SaundersBy CustomerOnly book about him, and it's a good one. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. An Inspiring and Interesting CharacterBy Davis HuntClarence Saunders was a remarkable man. Well-written and comfortable in its scope, this book takes you through his life and paints an adequately vivid picture of this gruff human who captures the core motive in each of our steps towards success. His life was fantastic. I love this man and have acquired him into me in the course of reading about him.

The grocery business began as a complicated service industry. Random pricing, inconsistent quantities and prescriptive salesmen made grocery shopping burdensome. It took one brash Memphian with uncommon vision and unbridled ambition to change everything. Clarence Saunders worked his way out of poverty and obscurity to found Piggly Wiggly in 1916. With an unprecedented approach, he virtually invented the concept of the modern self-service grocery store. Stores flourished, franchises spread and Saunders made millions. Yet just as the final bricks of Pink Palacehis garish marble mansionwere being laid, Saunders went bankrupt, and he was forced to sell Piggly Wiggly. A variety of new ventures helped Saunders out of bankruptcy, but he never duplicated his prior success. Memphis historian Mike Freeman tracks the remarkable life of this retail visionary.

From the AuthorThis book began in a bar, in downtown Memphis. I took a job there, thirty years ago, and was told the story about the first Piggly Wiggly store. Where I worked was the site of the original store. That fact motivated me to study Memphis history. I earned a MA at Memphis State University, and my thesis was this biography of Clarence Saunders. I assumed then a publishing deal was imminent, but that did not happen. Eventually I moved to other interests, particularly the life of Elvis Presley. I have had some success but always with the nagging thought, the Saunders book should be published. I discovered History Press a few months ago. This relatively new publishing company offers trade paperback books on a variety of local history subjects. I was happy they saw promise in my work. I edited my biography for clarity and length, leaving the essential story intact. I selected over 60 images which help tell the story. His story deserved to be told. If you are a Memphian, you may be familiar with Saunders. Years ago many people told stories about his forceful personality, his odd sense of humor, and his lavish spending habits. Two cultural institutions of the city, the Pink Palace Museum (the city's first museum) and the Lichterman Nature Center were his properties at one time. Inside the Pink Palace is a replica of the Piggly Wiggly store. Because he failed to keep his fortunes, we have these institutions today. Saunders was, at one time, well known beyond Memphis. He had a lengthy obituary in the New York Times. His creative work with the Piggly Wiggly design and marketing brought national attention to a new concept in the 1920's, serve yourself at the grocery store. He was a pioneer in the supermarket business. The concept of self-service is now used world wide, in small convenience stores to the "big box" retailers. He predicted that self-service could be used to sell a variety of goods. All those retail entrepreneurs owe a debt to his early success. Saunders' story is a story of "what if." What if he had not lost his first business idea and fortune in 1923. Would he be considered as prominent as his contemporary Henry Ford, who brought the automobile to the mass market? Would he be as prominent as Sam Walton, who in later years created the largest retail business in the world based upon a design of self service? We will never know. Sadly, his fame did diminish. A generation after I began my own research, and virtually everyone who actually knew Saunders has passed on. Today I hope my own work will bring attention to Clarence Saunders again. About the AuthorFor over thirty years, Mike Freeman has made a career out of his love for Memphis and regional history. He co-wrote, with Cindy Hazen, two books about Elvis Presley--The Best of Elvis in 1992 and Memphis Elvis Style in 1997--and a book based upon Patsy Cline's letters, Love Always Patsy, Patsy Cline's Letters to a Friend, in 1999. For eight years he owned and lived in the first home Elvis purchased at 1034 Audubon Drive in Memphis. Mike has also written or co-written magazine articles about the area's fascinating personalities. In 2007, Mike helped create three DVDs: Elvis' Memphis and Beyond Elvis' Memphis with Artsmagic, Inc. (UK) and Elvis: Return to Tupelo with Michael Rose Productions. With his partner, Sue Mack, Mike continues to do research today and offers guided tours of the region. This biography of Clarence Saunders was actually his first project and his MA thesis. Until now, only excerpts of this work were published in the Tennessee Historical Quarterly (1992) and Tennessee Encyclopedia (1997).