

ONCE UPON A TIME IN NORTH PARK THE PIGGLY WIGGLY

“Visit PIGGLY WIGGLY – it will pay you – a PIGGLY WIGGLY store was made for you!”

That was the message of a three-column ad in the San Diego Union one December morning in 1922. The ad announced the opening at 7:00 am Saturday Morning, December 9, 1922 of the Piggly Wiggly store at 30th and University in the building that now houses George’s Camera Shop. Piggly Wiggly remained on 30th Street until the early 1930’s when it was moved to 3015 North Park Way.

1922 was the year that the vicinity of 30th and University began to witness the expansion of the commercial district which by the mid-1920’s made North Park the largest and most active of San Diego’s suburban communities. Piggly Wiggly was the first of the large national grocery chains to service the North Park community.

Before Piggly Wiggly, North Park housewives shopped for groceries in small *Mom & Pop* stores where service was personal and the choice of products was limited. The large chains that began to reform merchandising in the USA during the war years introduced new, modern concepts of sales and service to consumers.

The Piggly Wiggly chain applied the principle of “step in and help yourself” to grocery shopping. Old fashioned practices of taking orders by telephone, putting charges on monthly accounts, and delivering purchases to customers homes were replaced by “cafeteria style” shopping. Customers were provided with baskets upon entering the store and served themselves from open display shelves. On the way out, the customer paid for purchases in cash and bundles were wrapped. Prices were said by Piggly Wiggly to be lower than those at independent grocery stores due to “cash and carry” techniques of merchandising and large volume purchasing.

The first Piggly Wiggly grocery store, a concept of Clarence Saunders, opened in Memphis, Tennessee in 1916. The modern concepts applied by Mr. Saunders became instantly popular with shoppers so that by 1922 there were over 3,000 Piggly Wiggly stores in 340 cities in 42 states in this country. Saunders’ chief associate, Dudley D. Williams, worked as organizer of every store in the chain.

In 1922, Williams moved to San Diego in order to supervise the opening of the downtown Piggly Wiggly on Seventh and Broadway. He also organized the North Park branch and was so impressed with the potential future of the commercial district here that he bought the franchise for the store at 30th and University. In 1923, after living for a few years at 3675 31st Street, Williams moved with his family to 3594 28th Street, his home for the final twenty years of his life.

By the time of his death in January 1949, Dudley Williams was the proprietor of a chain of 24 markets which he re-named the D.D. Williams Stores. His eldest son, D.D.

Williams, junior, continued to operate those markets until the 1970's. By that time, the North Park store had been overshadowed by the super-chains, Mayfair and Safeway.