

The "Piggly Wiggly" in the Grocery Trade

Unique Plan of a Memphis Man to Reduce the High Cost of Living by Giving the Customer a Chance to "Do It Yourself" Without the Aid of Clerks.

"Piggly Wiggly" is the latest comer in the grocery trade. Born in Memphis, its field of endeavor has gradually broadened till it has invaded Texas and Louisiana and is said to be meeting with a success that portends further extension.

"Piggly Wiggly" is nothing more or less than a highly original scheme for reducing the high cost of living by eliminating virtually all the clerical help appertaining to the average grocery store. It is the "cash and carry" system worked out to the "nth power" of "do it yourself and save paying someone else," which is, after all, the chief element in all the increase in our modern cost of living, especially in the merchandizing of groceries. If the overhead of a grocery store is—and statistics show that such is the case—17 to 20 per cent and that the biggest element in that cost is service and delivery and credit, then the more the customer undertakes to do for himself the more the costs are reduced.

Clarence Saunders of Memphis appears to be the originator of the scheme and the name; also of a patented system of fixtures and other essentials for that type of store. He has protected the name carefully, after first having selected it with a view to having "something different," which could not be counterfeited without palpable intent at fraud and deception. Manifestly he got a name that is new—distinctly new, but perhaps not especially attractive on its face—but in the light of experience valuable as representative of an idea. He started the stores in Memphis, but after evolving the type of fixtures, the trade-marked name and one or two other features, he is selling the rights, along with the equipment to others, and the stores are now blossoming in Houston, Tex.; Lake Charles, La., and Birmingham, Tenn. Mr. Saunders has issued an interesting booklet on the subject, which by permission (it is copy-righted) is the basis of this story.

The "Piggly Wiggly" system of store-keeping is simply the cafeteria idea enlarged and standardized. The store is a series of aisles, separated and defined by bins, shelves and counters of patented design, each compartment containing a particular article, plainly marked as to price and available for the customer to help himself. On entering, the customer may purchase a basket, or he may bring his own, then pass through the various aisles and select his purchases at will. Near the exit he passes a cash register, where the assorted lot of goods is inspected and checked by the cashier and payment made. After paying for the goods, the customer may wrap his parcels at a counter provided for the purpose or not as he chooses. From start to finish, however, the customer is his own clerk, and the only attendants are the cashier and the porters who fill the bins.

Some of the most noteworthy working units of the "Piggly Wiggly" system which form constituent parts thereof are: The Saunders' patented store furniture; mirrors in diamond pointed ends of the main display cases of the Saunders' apparatus; swinging price tags used as a price marking for each compartment division of the Saunders' apparatus; a special price holding device for use on sack flour; a two-sided display refrigerator; a two-sided display case for cured meats; specially designed ham rack, sugar bins, bins for package goods, candy case, mince meat and pickle stand, fruit stand, bread case, school supply and stationery stand, basket rack, broom and mop rack and bargain display rack, all of which are constructed with the view of securing the highest efficiency; a detail scheme for displaying stock in the sales rooms; baskets for use of customers while in the store; a checking and settlement counter adjacent to the exit; an entrance and exit turnstile by means of which customers are controlled.

A diamond grill mesh work running crosswise and connecting two main sections is also included, thus preventing ingress or egress to that portion of the apparatus while at the same time affording a view from without and from within. A grill work of similar design runs lengthwise on each side of the checking and settlement counter for the purpose of preventing ingress and egress at the points thus protected, while at the same time affording a view from without and from within.

Specially constructed stock-room furniture has removable tray combinations in connection therewith. Specially constructed potato bins, orange and lemon bins and meat and lard counters for stock room. A specially constructed stock room counter has bins underneath and above providing a dual capacity for economy of time in assembling at one point articles to be weighed on automatic weighing machine and also those articles than can be weighed only by hand methods.

It is intended that the reputation of this particular kind of store shall so radiate as to be a part of every town and city. A certain standard of excellence must be maintained in every unit forming the "Piggly Wiggly" system, so that the acquaintance of a customer with the merits of one store shall be the same acquaintance with all.

In neighborhoods where the idea of service has been highly emphasized, it may be that the "Piggly Wiggly" system would not be a success, but in the places where it has been installed it is reported to be making not only economies in the cost of living but also developing a high degree of competitive force against the chain stores and similar institutions. The first store in a city is fancifully called the "King," the next the "Prince," and the others are designated by numbers. In every way there is an attempt at originality, which seems to possess a certain advertising value. To quote Mr. Saunders on his experiences in Memphis:

"The construction of the apparatus makes it possible for customers in large numbers to pass throughout the entire display portion of the store room by a forward movement, without confusion and with a certainty of reaching a particular well defined point known as the checking and settlement counter, before they make their exit from the store, and while making this circuit of the store they are required in every instance to pass in close proximity to every article offered for sale, and in coming in close touch with the merchandise offered for sale, which is designated in price by swinging price tags, each customer is allowed to make his selections of merchandise according to his own bent and inclination, without, by argument, persuasion or otherwise, being constrained to buy something that possibly he does not want to buy.

As an illustration of the immediate success incident to the first "Piggly Wiggly" store opened for business in Memphis, the following is interesting:

"Occupying the same building for more than two years prior to the establishment of 'King Piggly Wiggly' there was a store known as 'United Store No. 20.' This United Store No. 20 was known as the headquarters store of a chain of retail grocery stores operating under that name by different numbers, twenty-one being the total number. This store, for the six months' period immediately preceding its occupancy by 'King Piggly Wiggly,' had sales of approximately \$34,000 at an approximate expense of \$5,200. In the same building, with practically the same clerks and management, the sales of 'King Piggly Wiggly' immediately following the six months' period referred to, amounted to approximately \$144,000, with an expense account of approximately \$3,400.

"Thus it will be seen that the 'Piggly Wiggly' system saved in store expense \$300 per month for a period of six months over the store expense of the United Store No. 20 for the six months preceding the 'Piggly Wiggly' period and, in addition to saving \$300 per month in store expense, had a gain in sales of approximately eighty thousand dollars, with a store expense against the total of 'King Piggly Wiggly' sales for that period of a little more than 3 per cent, as compared with an expense account under United Store management in the same building of more than 15 per cent store expense.

"There are eight 'Piggly Wiggly' stores in Memphis, and one in a Memphis suburb, which had sales for week ending Oct. 6, 1917, of \$25,455.73, at an average store expense, exclusive of royalty, of 3 12-100 per cent on each dollar of sales.

"Since the establishment of the first 'Piggly Wiggly' store, which is designated as 'King Piggly Wiggly,' these stores have grown in popularity with the consuming public of Memphis. Even though seven competing 'Piggly Wiggly' stores have been launched in competition, the sales volume of the 'King' store has not diminished one dollar, but, on the contrary, are much larger than they were without the competition.

"According to the most authentic information obtainable, the ordinary chain cash grocery store has average sales of between \$400 and \$500 per week, at

an expense of between 12 1/2 and 17 1/2 per cent on each dollar of sales. The record of the 'Piggly Wiggly' stores operating within Memphis city limits is an average weekly sale volume of of \$3,000 per store unit, with an average store expense of approximately 3 per cent.

"This extraordinary sales volume and low store expense have been accomplished in the face of very keen and long established competition with a system of ordinary chain cash grocery stores that number forty-three. Notwithstanding this competition, eight 'Piggly Wiggly' stores in Memphis, and one in Birmingham (a suburb of Memphis) are producing a volume of sales which exceeds by a considerable volume the combined sales total of the forty-three."

THE VITAL FIGURES.

United States Government statistics reveal these facts which every life insurance agent should have on the end of his tongue:

358,000 only out of 100,000,000 people report incomes in excess of \$2,500 per year.

Ninety per cent of estates of over \$5,000 are entirely dissipated in seven years.

Nineteen out of every twenty fail to provide either for their old age or families.

Over 8,000,000 women must work to live.

Ninety-five per cent of men engaged in business fail.

Ninety per cent of children who enter school at age six have to stop before completing the eighth grade to go to work.

One in every two men at age twenty-five will be dependent upon some one else at sixty-five.

Nine out of ten men leave no estate.

Life insurance companies are distributing more than \$2,000,000 per day.

Life insurance has decreased pauperism more than thirty-three and one-third per cent in thirty-five years.

Less than seven per cent of the value of American lives is covered by life insurance.

Life insurance saves the nation more than \$30,000,000 per year in maintaining the poor.

ADDITIONAL BRITISH IMPORT PROHIBITIONS.

From November 16 the importation of the following goods is prohibited: Abrasive wheels; binder and reaper twine; brass rod and brass wire; cycles other than motor cycles; electric meters; electric motor's over one-half horsepower; electric hand lamps and torches; magnetos; measuring tapes and rules of all descriptions, including Vernier's micrometers; pens, penholders, pencils, and all other stationery of which the importation is not already prohibited; vegetables in brine.—(Cablegram from American consul general, London, Nov. 17.)

THE MOTHERS OF MEN.

The bravest battle that ever was fought!

Shall I tell you where and when?

On the maps of the world you will find it not—

'Tis fought by the mothers of men.

Nay, not with canon or battle shot,

With sword or nobler pen!

Nay, not with eloquent words of thought

From mouths of wonderful men,

But deep in the walled-up woman's heart—

Of woman that would not yield,

But bravely, silently, bore her part—

Lo, there is that battle field!

No marshalling troop, no bivouac song,

No banner to gleam and wave;

But, oh! their battles, they last, they last,

From babyhood to the grave.

Yet faithful still as a bridge of stars,

She fights in her walled-up town—

Fights on and on in endless wars,

Then, silent, unseen, goes down.

Oh, ye with banners and battle shot;

And soldiers to shout and praise,

I tell you the kingliest victories fought

Were fought in those silent ways.

Oh, spotless woman in a world of shame,

With splendid and silent scorn

Go back to God as white as you came—

This kingliest warrior born.

—Joaquin Miller.