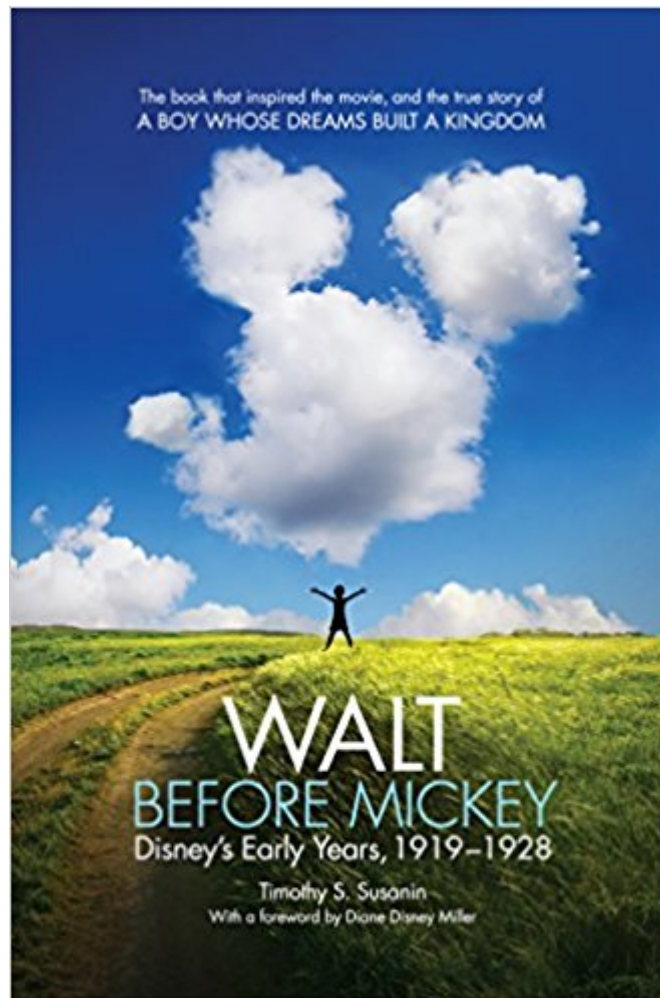




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# Walt Before Mickey: Disney's Early Years, 1919-1928



## Synopsis

For ten years before the creation of Mickey Mouse, Walt Disney struggled with, failed at, and eventually mastered the art and business of animation. Most biographies of his career begin in 1928, when *Steamboat Willie* was released. That first Disney Studio cartoon with synchronized sound made its main character—Mickey Mouse—an icon for generations. But *Steamboat Willie* was neither Disney's first cartoon nor Mickey Mouse's first appearance. Prior to this groundbreaking achievement, Walt Disney worked in a variety of venues and studios, refining what would become known as the Disney style. In *Walt before Mickey: Disney's Early Years, 1919–1928*, Timothy Susanin creates a portrait of the artist from age seventeen to the cusp of his international renown. After serving in the Red Cross in France after World War I, Walt Disney worked for advertising and commercial art in Kansas City. Walt used these experiences to create four studios—Kaycee Studios, Laugh-O-gram Films, Disney Brothers Studio, and Walt Disney Studio. Using company documents, private correspondence between Walt and his brother Roy, contemporary newspaper accounts, and new interviews with Disney's associates, Susanin traces Disney's path. The author shows Disney to be a complicated, resourceful man, especially during his early career. *Walt before Mickey*, a critical biography of a man at a crucial juncture, provides the “missing decade” that started Walt Disney's career and gave him the skills to become a name known worldwide.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Real film-history research is hard and tedious work; it often involves endless hours of

digging through old journals and documents, searching for some elusive detail. My hat is off to Tim Susanin for his painstaking labors to illuminate the obscure corners of Walt Disney's early career. Thanks to his efforts, dates, names, and other previously unknown details of Walt's early years have been brought into the open.

J. B. Kaufman, author of *South of the Border with Mickey: Walt Disney and the Good Neighbor Program, 1941-1948* and (with Russell Merritt) *Walt in Wonderland: The Silent Films of Walt Disney*

"Tim Susanin has unearthed a goldmine of information that enables us to focus on Walt Disney's early career as we've never been able to before. He has dug deep and come up with details and colorful material that deepen our understanding of the man. Bravo!"

Leonard Maltin, author of *The Disney Films* and *Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons*

From the foreword by Diane Disney Miller:

"I have always loved to hear my dad talk about his life, especially the early part . . . his childhood, family, the Kansas City days, and especially how he met and courted my mother. Tim [Susanin] has done an amazing job of chronicling the lives of the people in that period who affected Dad's life. His research brought out the fact that some of Dad's early benefactors were his neighbors on Bellefontaine, people who had seen him grow up and were aware of his industrious nature. Dad, it appears, was never shy about asking for a loan. But he was diligent about repaying it . . .

"Tim continues on for several more years, all exciting for the brothers and their wives, though not without periods of anxiety. He ends with the loss of Oswald the Rabbit and the creation of Mickey Mouse. Dad's telegram to Roy as he, with my mother, was about to depart New York for home was

"Leaving tonight stopping over KC arrive home Sunday morning seven thirty don't worry everything OK will give details when arrive"

Walt. He didn't mention the fact that they had lost Oswald. They would need a new plan, a new character. Roy, who had been caring for my parents' chow dog Sunnee, recalls that nothing was said until Roy inquired,

"Tell me about it, kid . . . What kind of deal did you make?"

"We haven't got a deal," Dad cheerfully replied. "We're going to start a new series."

More Praise for the Book:

"Walt Disney was a man in movement, someone whose exceptional energy and curiosity permitted him to create great animated features and the extraordinary Disneyland park. Tim Susanin gives us our closest look yet at Walt when he was just starting to become that great visionary of the middle of the twentieth century. His book is a chronicle of Walt Disney in the 1920s, when he was just starting up Hollywood's ladder whose lowest rungs happened to be in Kansas City. We meet many of Walt's friends and colleagues, too, people who have been little more than names in earlier

biographies and studio histories but whose stories are told here in unprecedented detail. This book does a superb job of tracking the restless young Walt Disney through the decade of triumphs and trials that preceded the great turning point in his life: the creation of Mickey

Mouse. — Michael Barrier, author of *The Animated Man: A Life of Walt Disney and Hollywood Cartoons: American Animation in its Golden Age* — “What a monumental work, and a very accurate one. No one has ever gone into as much detail on Walt’s early life. This will be a joy to researchers for years to come. — Dave Smith, Archivist Emeritus, The Walt Disney Company — “The men and women who surrounded Walt in the 1920s come to life as never before thanks to Tim Susanin. Meticulously researched and easy to read, *Walt before Mickey* is bound to shape the history of Walt’s early days for years to come. — Didier Ghez, editor of the series *Walt’s People: Talking Disney with the Artists Who Knew Him*

The untold story of ten critical, formative years in the great producer’s life --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book is a very interesting bio of Walt’s early life as an animator and filmmaker before the creation of Mickey Mouse. This book is exhaustively researched, and while this book is informative and interesting the amount and degree of research is its one weak point. There is way too much time spent detailing various aspects of extraneous information that offer very little valuable information about early Walt. Do we really need to know ancestral information about every person early Walt interacted with or where everyone lived in relation to the studio? Even with that said, this book is interesting and should be on every Disney fan’s reading list.

Not much into biographies, had to get one for a school project (subject... psychology). Reading the biographies (yes, bought another one as I needed to have certain information to write a report, and the first one did not contain what was needed.) with a purpose behind the reading made them enjoyable to me. If you just want to read it for knowledge of the person or how hard getting your dream started can be, this is a good book. Having the knowledge of failures, progression, setbacks, and opportunities provides a well rounded individual and someone unattainable.

Just to show the wide audience that Walt Disney’s start was not like the make believe world of rosy easy happy endings. He went thru a lot to be successful, try and try again, dogged determination to

succeed and deserved the success at the end. It can be a business book inspirational reading for the future businessman. Like some saying from I forgot who, success is 90% hard work and only 10% luck.

This book was disappointing...too much emphasis on early co-workers and places of business and not enough focus on the man himself. It left me wanting to know more about him and his early life.

Very well done for an independent video.

Love it

Kinda boring. Should've seen the movie first

This book is very interesting things I never knew about Walt Disney

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