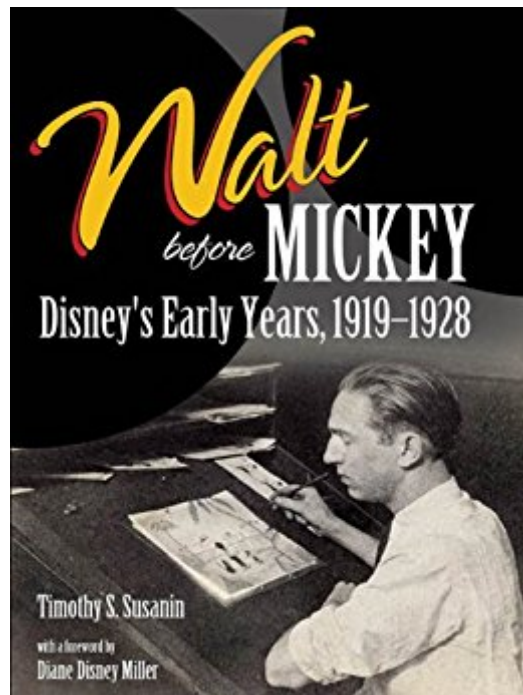


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Walt Before Mickey: Disney's Early Years, 1919-1928



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, 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.

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Customer Reviews

About The AuthorCurrently, Timothy S. Susanin acts as the general counsel for a Fortune 500 Company. Previously, he served the Federal Government and the NAVY JAG as counsel. Obviously, Susanini is no stranger to laborious and meticulous research. Walt Before Mickey is proof of that. The ReviewBy far, this is one of the most comprehensive books about any single period of Walt Disney's life. The author presents a detailed look at a very short time in Walt Disney's career when he was working professionally before the creation of Mickey Mouse. Walt Before Mickey starts with a short look at Walt's life and moves through his first jobs in Kansas City until the formation Kaycee Studios, his first studio, in 1921. The majority of the book recounts Walt's time in other Kansas City studios, the Laugh-O-Gram years and the formation of the Disney Bros. Studios in Los Angeles. As expected, the book does end before the creation of Mickey Mouse. There are several themes throughout most Disney biographies: consistent and early failure paired with an unchallenged sense of destiny; bringing together the best people; and managing people with visionary leadership. Walt Before Mickey spends a indulgent amount of time describing such events. I have read the major biographies on Walt Disney and I am always shocked by the nexus of animation that occurred and grew out of Kansas City. Most biographers agree that the landscape of animation would be vastly different without Disney pulling together artists from his local Kansas City environs. The strength of this book could be considered its weakness; we see an almost daily look at Walt's life. We meet all of the characters that worked with, influenced or helped a young Walt Disney as artist.

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