



Photos and illustrations courtesy of Norman Davis unless noted otherwise.

ED'S FAMILY FOODS (Piggly-Wiggly, Super Valu) – 120 South Jefferson Street - 1954.



With the closing of ED'S FAMILY FOODS on December 11, 2015, its sale and impending demolition of the building, the last remaining grocery store in downtown Richland Center will be history. It is, indeed, the end of an era. As Chris Fink, owner, explained, "Unfortunately the loyalty of a small locally owned "Ma and Pa" type stores are a thing of the past, and there weren't enough people coming thru our doors to shop and keep us in business. We, Chris and Debbie, along with our kids have worked tirelessly to find a way to get more people to shop at Ed's and over the last few years we haven't been able to turn things around. The grocery business has changed dramatically in recent years. We know that a grocery store downtown provided many benefits and we served many needs of the community...however as expenses continue to rise and sales fall, we had no choice but to Go Out of Business. We did not sell the business, in fact we tried to find a buyer but there were already too many grocery options for a town this size... We want to thank our regular and loyal customers who have been with us over the long haul...we also thank you for your friendship!"



Chris, Debbie, Zack and Shauni Fink.

There has been a grocery store located at the corner of Court and Jefferson Streets since 1954 when Piggly Wiggly purchased a building there that housed a Buick/Pontiac dealership and had it remodeled into a supermarket. Until that time, Richland Center had been home to a rather large number of neighborhood grocery stores scattered

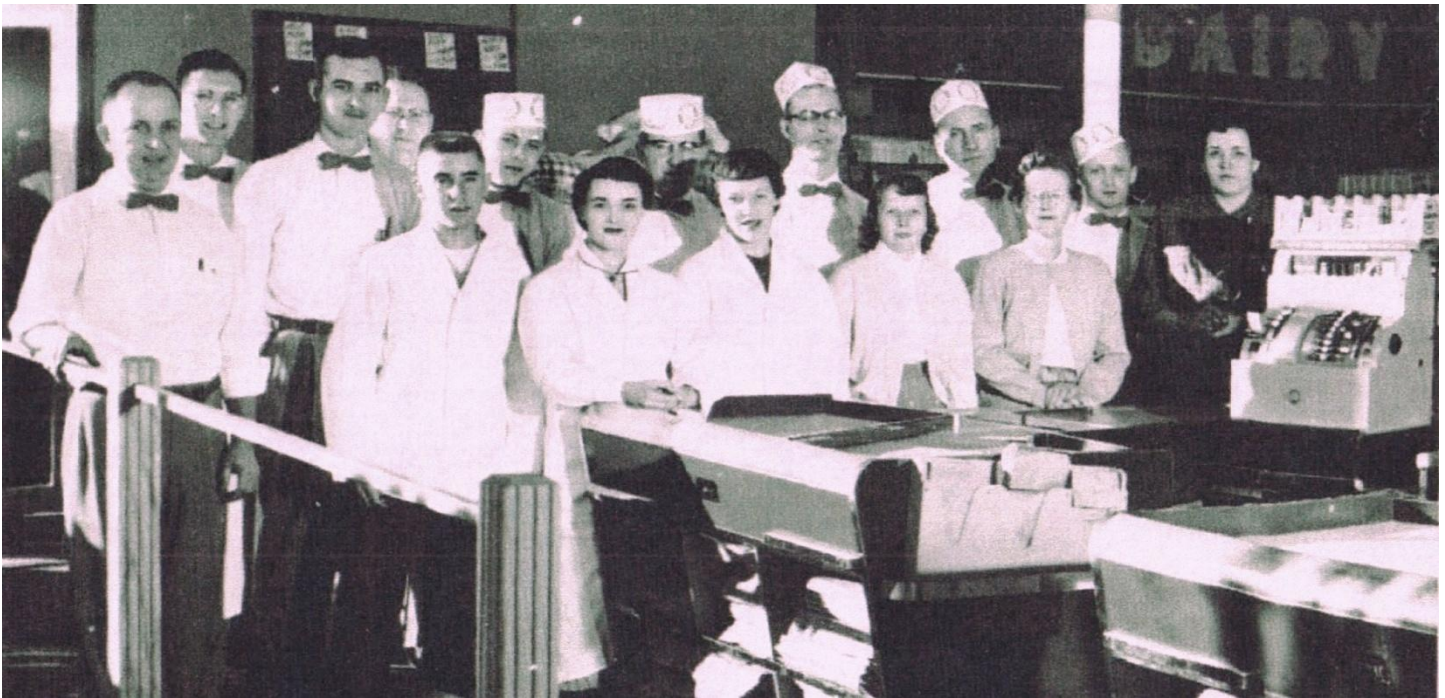


Richland County History Room photo.

throughout the city. Before the chain stores replaced them, small groceries were the center of activity in most neighborhoods in Richland Center as well as the outlying communities. People got the news, met their neighbors and did their grocery shopping. Each neighborhood had

one; sometimes more, Wade's Grocery and Hestetune's were directly across the street from each other on North Main Street. Many of them were well-known by their patrons for certain specialty items they did better than their competitors; as an example Rudersdorf's Market was known for its quality meat selection.

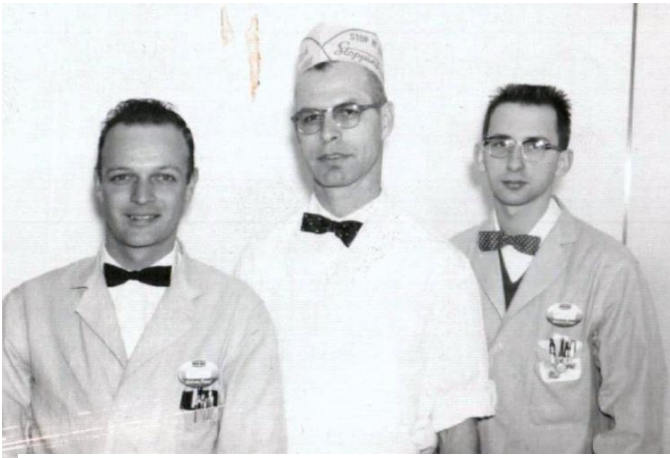
Piggly Wiggly is a supermarket chain operating in the Midwestern and Southern regions of the United States, primarily in smaller cities and towns. Its first outlet opened in 1916 in Memphis, Tennessee, which is notable for having been the first true self-service grocery store, and the originator of various familiar supermarket features such as checkout stands, individual item price marking and shopping carts.



Piggly Wiggly staff in 1954; Lawrence Sowle is in the back row fourth from the right.

The Piggly Wiggly store in Richland Center opened on Nov. 7, 1954, with Russell Sowell as its first manager. Lawrence Sowle came from a Piggly Wiggly location in LaCrosse to organize the meat department and stayed for 31 years through a number of ownership and company changes to retire on Sept. 10, 1985. Lawrence noted that the meat department was a service meat counter, where the customer told the butcher what they wanted and it was made up for them on order. He said the meat counter became self-service in 1982 as well as a bakery being added.

Ruby Hodge and Norman Davis told of their experiences in the grocery business during their long tenure there. Ruby Hodge is the wife of William Hodge Jr. who was a store manager when it was a Super Valu



Left to right: William Hodge, Lawrence Sowle, Norman Davis. William's son Steve also was a store manager.

location. Hodge later left for a position at Rudersdorf's Market. Norman Davis managed the produce department at Super Valu for many years. The Super Valu was once part of a regional chain of a number of stores serviced from Super Valu distribution in Minneapolis.

The owners included Jerry McKeever, Lyle Sutton (1963-1967), Mrs. Pat Ashley and son, George upon Carroll Ashley's death (1967-1987). Ed and Bev Fink purchased Carroll's Super Valu in 1987 and changed

the name to Ed's Family Foods. They operated the grocery as an independent store but remained part of

the Super Valu network. The Finks came from the Minneapolis area where Ed had a long involvement in the grocery business since his father owned a supermarket. Fink had also been a manager in a Super Valu in Minnetonka, Minn. Upon Ed and Bev's retirement, their son Chris and Debbie Fink became the owners.

Super Valu Celebrates Expansion



Ribbon-cutting ceremony in 1982 kicked off the grand opening of the greatly expanded store. Left to right: Store manager, Steven Hodge; Bernard Purdy, field representative, Super Valu-Minnesota; Pat Ashley, co-owner; Lloyd Persinger, president of the Chamber of Commerce; and George Ashley, who owned the store with his mother Pat.

Ruby Hodge told of an anecdote going back to 1967 when she did an in-store demonstration for Tombstone Pizza products. Frozen foods such as pizza were new at that time; when an elderly lady disagreed with the pronunciation of "pizza," and was corrected, she claimed she did not care for it however it was pronounced.



Left to right: Jean Storms, Dennis Wallace, Mary Decot, Karen Wilson, Kathy Wilson, Doris King, Pat Ashley, Linda Shireman, Diane McCaskey, Mick Cosgrove, Joan Drake, Sandra Furgason, Carroll Ashley, Terry Koch, Lamont Glick, Lawrence Sowle, Jim Rinehart, Vaughn Tanner, Jim Clausius, Fred Clary, Steve Hodge, Tom Glass and Norman Davis.

THANKS

From
Piggly-Wiggly

STEWING CHICKENS PAN R. 100¢ CLEAR

TENDER BLADE CUT CHUCK ROAST	. lb.	25c	TENDER YOUNG BEEF LIVER
LEG D' VEAL ROAST	. lb.	19c	CENTER CUT PORK CHOPS

This narrative is dedicated to long-time grocery-man Lawrence Sowle - 97 years of age - 2016.