



# **The Shooting Salvationist: J. Frank Norris and the Murder Trial that Captivated America (Indie Next Pick)**

*David R. Stokes*

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The Reverend Doctor J. Frank Norris was many things in the 1920's: a pastor who led the nation's first megachurch, a provocative publisher, and a pioneer broadcaster. With the flair of a great showman, he railed against vice and conspiracies he saw everywhere to a congregation of more than 10,000 at First Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas. His church served as a venue for a steady stream of politicians and performers, from William Howard Taft to Will Rogers, but Norris himself was by far the biggest attraction. Following the death of William Jennings Bryan, he was poised to become the leading fundamentalist figure in America. This changed, though, in a moment of violence one sweltering Saturday in July when he shot and killed an unarmed man in his church office.

Saturated with vivid detail, *The Shooting Salvationist* skillfully explores the events leading up to one of the most intriguing -- yet largely forgotten -- crime stories in America's history. Set against the backdrop of the post-World-War-I oil boom, when oilmen lit cigars with \$1,000 bills in hotel lobbies, and while Prohibition was the law of the land, it leads to a courtroom drama pitting some of the most powerful lawyers of the era against each other with the life of a wildly popular, and equally loathed, religious leader hanging in the balance.

"For all the colorful characters who became part of Fort Worth's history, surely none surpassed J. Frank Norris, the fiery fundamentalist preacher at Fort Worth's First Baptist Church in pure outlandishness. . . . In this book David Stokes tell the J. Frank Norris story. If I hadn't grown up in Fort Worth, I would have thought someone made all this up but no one did. It really happened." --from the Foreword by Bob Schieffer

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