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The Red Store in Sandy Run, South Carolina: Significance and Architectural Features.

The Red Store represents an architecturally and historically significant piece of history. It is one of the few surviving dwellings of the late-18th, and early-19th century Swiss-German “Saxe Gotha” township along the Congaree River, and the only surviving mercantile building.

Strategically built at the intersection of the Charleston-to-Columbia and Orangeburg roads, it was an essential part of early overland trade, agriculture, and settlement in the South Carolina midlands. As the “State” or “Stagecoach Road” saw more traffic between the Capital City and the port of Charleston, it became a crucial landmark where travelers could buy provisions, rest, and have a meal. Besides being significant to state travel, trade, and development, it supplied many of the local farm families of the community with vital goods on credit.

During the Civil War, it was a navigational landmark for both Union and Confederate soldiers. The building was miraculously spared destruction by Sherman’s troops, after its occupants were deemed too fragile to move from the building. It remained central during Reconstruction, when the new government of Lexington County declared the store would hold Sandy Run’s first township meeting in 1869. It continued its critical function as a U.S. Post Office, meeting place, and polling location through the late-19th and early-20th centuries. During the turbulent creation of Calhoun County in 1907, the citizens voted at the Red Store only to be

met with armed tension between law enforcement and ruffians, who came from other precincts to voice their opposition (though no violence ensued). The store's colorful and proud history continues into the 1920's, after John F. Geiger (whose family still maintains its almost 200-year-ownership) refused to move the store for the construction of a new highway. Instead, the current road (U.S. 176) was re-routed around the rear of the building, giving it the distinct curve at its intersection with Stabler Hill Road.

It is unclear when the original portion of The Red Store was built, though it is likely from the early-19th century, if not the 1790's. The oldest part of the structure is only one room. In 1808, a ledger appeared showing the store being operated by John Henry Eiffert. The Eiffert family was prominent early-on in the predominantly German and Swiss Saxe-Gotha Township, and what is today Lexington County. Columbia would later be built on a significant piece of the former Saxe-Gotha site, near Friday's Ferry. There was some skirmishing here during the Revolutionary War. What is currently Richland, Lexington, and Calhoun Counties, was primarily a gateway to the rugged backcountry in the early-Federalist era.

According to the records of the Sandy Run Lutheran Church, Eiffert bought "The Red Store tract" from a man named William Taylor sometime prior to 1808. The church was later built on a ceded portion of this land. A page of the Lexington County Deed Book shows that in 1811, Eiffert sells the store to Samuel Jumper, Sr. (Lex. Deed BK A, p. 474). There isn't very much information about Jumper, or what his ownership meant for the store. He sells it only eight-years later to Harman H. Geiger (Lex. Deed BK C, p. 800-801). It is the Geiger lineage that owns this property to the present-day, 196-years later, despite changing hands for several short periods. According to the family's oral history, it is in 1819 that a one-story residence is built adjacent to the store (though not yet connected). Even today, there is a wooden sign hanging on

the facade facing Old State Road; *The Red Store - Since 1819* (see image on next page). In 1822, Henry Muller and Daniel Senn buy the store. They enter into a contract, and create the partnership “Muller & Senn.” To add to the confusing succession of ownership, a store would later be operated in Columbia, South Carolina around the time of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Both Muller and Senn are very common surnames in this part of South Carolina, further alluding to the area’s Germanic heritage. It would also be Henry Muller that added a second-story of the residence next door, circa 1825 (though the exact date is unknown). It is likely, in the author’s opinion, that the whole interior of the house was updated at this point to match the first- and second-stories. What is known for a fact, is that in 1826, Daniel Senn names Henry Muller the executor for his last will and testament. This is due to his declining health. Ledgers written from 1828 to 1829 dropped Senn’s name, with all amounts made payable to “Henry Muller” (as opposed to “Muller & Senn”).

The store operates under Muller’s sole proprietorship until 1837, when William Assmann acquires it. The following year, Assmann enters into a short-lived partnership with James Wingard, operating as “Assmann & Wingard.” In 1840, Wingard’s name disappears for the ledgers. Finally, around 1846, the final major addition is built. Since the store was built, it had remained completely separate from the house. Now, a kitchen and dining room were added between the two, giving The Red Store a long, rectangular floorplan. This was likely due to increased stagecoach traffic on The State Road between Charleston and South Carolina’s growing capital city. Assmann’s Store had become a popular stage stop, where passengers could grab a bite to eat and buy goods. Meanwhile, the horses would be fed and watered in preparation of continuing the journey. Bear in mind, travelling to Columbia over the unpaved roadways took about three-days. It was truly an exhausting and uncomfortable ride for everyone involved.

Ernest Frederick W. Muller arrives from Germany in 1851 to live and work in his uncle's store. It is likely he was escaping post-revolutionary strife. Here, he is an apprentice to Assmann as a storekeeper. What is fascinating about E.F.W. Muller, is the journal he kept survives, and has been transcribed into English from German. In its pages, he details the voyage from Germany to Charleston, the city as it appeared in the early-1850's, and the journey to The Red Store 16-miles east of Columbia. In 1853, he marries one of Assmann's daughters solidifying his role in the store proprietorship. Ledgers through the 1850's and to 1862 still show only Assmann's name. A ledger from 1867 is addressed "F. Muller" instead.

The Red Store remained largely unaffected by the Civil War until 1865. It became a crucial landmark in Sherman's Carolinas Campaign. Several Confederate veterans have recollections of the store as well. In 1908, J.D. Hogan, was one such veteran from South Carolina that recalled passing The Red Store before turning southwest on a forced march to the Edisto River bridge. After the Confederate retreat, General O.O. Howard and the XI Corps, under Sherman's command, passed through Sandy Run on February 14, 1865. A postwar map from 1891, and the Geigers' own oral history, confirm that The Red Store was a Union headquarters near the bivouac on Sandy Run (Creek). It was also one of two buildings in Sandy Run spared destruction, because its inhabitants were "too fragile" to move. From here, Sherman moved up the Congaree, and into Columbia from the west (across the Congaree River). Even more amazing, the diary of a Confederate soldier D.D. Dantzler details stopping at the Red Store on May 11, 1865 while returning to Charleston, along with another veteran. Though not part of any battle, Sandy Run is contextually important to the Burning of Columbia and the war in the Carolinas.

Prior to the Civil War, South Carolina was made up of “districts” which later became counties. In 1869, newly formed Lexington County decided that The Red Store would hold a township meeting for Sandy Run. Even today, Sandy Run remains an incorporated community. It is also during this period, that the last definitive 19th-century ledger comes from The Red Store. Dated 1873, it is addressed F. Muller. What is so unusual is that his name is printed, as opposed to hand-written in ink, and “Baltimore, M.D.” is crossed-out just below his name. As bizarre as it sounds, Muller supposedly operated another store in Baltimore for a short period of time. This is the last document that the author found from the tumultuous Reconstruction-period, and the last piece of information provided until the 20th-century.

The year 1907 marked more turmoil in Sandy Run, this time over the creation of Calhoun County. The local people could vote one of two ways: stay in Lexington County, or form part of the brand new one. Voters were surprised when an armed mob showed up to the Sandy Run polls, at The Red Store, as attempted to sway opinion in favor of staying. A period newspaper article writes about a stand-off after the sheriff arrived. The situation was diffused without any violence, and as history would have it, Sandy Run is today in Calhoun County. It was mentioned to me by Mr. Henry Fulmer, Director of the Manuscripts Division at the U. of S.C. Caroliniana Library, that he was told the store operated until the 1910’s. It functioned at least as a Post Office (if not a store). It was also a common landmark for locals; some children even used it as a waypoint when planning bicycle rides. The residence was occupied for quite sometime after this as well, allowing it to be preserved.

Harman H. Geiger, born in The Red Store’s house in 1935, tells me what his father experienced first-hand. Frank Geiger owned and operated the store in the 1920’s. During this period, Old State Road (formerly called “The State Road”) was re-routed to the side facing the

rear of the building. Driving by today, you are actually looking at the store's rear facade. A state atlas from 1873 confirms this. Concrete blocks also replaced the original piers, which were allegedly stone or brick. Stone is not incredibly uncommon in this part of the midlands. Frank Geiger's father, Harman's grandfather, also added iron supports under the floor joists for added support, and to prevent them from sagging as much. He was not sure what the date was on that repair. Frank Geiger lived in the house at least until the 1950's, when several photos were taken with written descriptions of The Red Store. As I rummaged through the building, now abandoned, there was a newspaper lying on the floor from the early-1990's. It is possible, with all of the modern trash and debris, that the building was occupied until that point.

Architecturally, the early-19th century two-room store (see interior below) matches the remainder of the building with wooden clapboard siding, and a single-gable roof with a loft. The roof, which appears to originally have had cypress shakes (see photo bottom of page, front elevation left oblique of house), today has asphalt shingles. The "fish scale" style asphalt shingles are more of a pre-war feature, maybe even later in the 1940's. It incorporates a simplistic style, with two doors built opposite one another in the far eastern room. The rear elevation, facing U.S. 176 "Old State Road", features one doorway at the middle of each room, with four windows total (two per door, one per each side), and board-and-batten shutters with wrought-iron hinges. The windows on the store are all 4/4 double-sashed and aligned front-to-back of the building. The front elevation features three modified two-pane windows (to accommodate more shelf-space on the walls), one beside the door at the far-left. The ceiling joists are left exposed. The first floor of the house, built in 1819, features a square, four-room floor plan with each room connected by two doorways typical of a period South Carolina rural cottage. The width of the house is roughly one-and-a-quarter widths wider than the store and

added wing. It has two rectangular brick chimneys and a wrap-around porch with a shed roof on the exterior, supported by wooden Doric pilasters. The front and back doors are aligned opposite with a doorway in the middle. Both doors have transom and sidelights. The two rooms sharing the western wall have four sets of 12/12 double-sashed windows each, two on each of the outer-walls facing the porch, with two wooden louvered shutters each. Both the original house and dining room (top of page) addition have bead board ceilings. The second-story addition was added in 1825, evident by the staircase wrapping around the four walls of the southeast room on the first floor (under the stairs, at the northwest corner of the room, is a closet). The second story features three bedrooms placed directly on top of the three rooms on the first-floor. Each side has two dormers (four total) with 6/6 double-sashed windows. The western wall has two more 6/6 windows, one in each bedroom while the eastern wall has one 6/6 window in its corresponding bedroom. All of the walls of the house are plaster on wood lath. The center wing addition, added in 1846, consists of a kitchen and dining room linking the house and the store. Both rooms have 4/4 double-sashed windows aligned opposite one another. The kitchen features a built-in cupboard in the northwest corner along with a square, narrow brick chimney used as a stove flue. There is a door way into the store at the southeast corner, one in western walls going into the dining room, and one exterior door in the front. The dining room features two doors and their corresponding windows facing opposite each other with a built-in cabinet in the eastern wall (see photo, bottom, previous page), adjacent to the doorway into the kitchen. Unlike the kitchen, the dining room has plaster walls (see above, the kitchen has clapboard walls). On the western wall, two doors on are on either side, leading to the front and back foyers. The wall also has fireplace, with a shared chimney built with the original house, and a built-in closet to the right of that.

The Red Store is an irreplaceable part of South Carolina's vernacular architectural history as it slowly decays into ruin. Despite the author's efforts to drum-up support, even with the help of the owners, there simply is very little money left. Attempts to nominate it for the National Register have stalled out for the time being, as more time and research is needed. The hope is, that in the near future, a roadside marker will be placed on Highway 176 so the story can be, in-part, told. Ideally, the whole structure will be preserved and possibly restored to its mid-19th century prominence. The very least that can be done is to stabilize it, and conserve part of it so that Sandy Run can tell its story. A contextual survey, Historic Country Stores of South Carolina, took great interest in the building early-on, passing along the information provided on social media. The main criticism rests with the SHPO, and their lackluster response. While no one expects them to shell out money on such a project, communication is also not their strong-suit when it comes to something so time sensitive. While its significance has already been well-established, I'm afraid these photos and the written records may be all that is left of The Red Store, and its vernacular architecture, before another decade. Appendix: Interior Photos of The Red Store Residence

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