

Vicksburg Historical Society

General Store

This building represents the many small general merchandise stores once located every five to ten miles apart in the rural areas around Vicksburg, Fulton and Scotts.



These one-of-a-kind country stores flourished until the years following World War II, when better roads and more reliable automobiles, combined with the growth of suburbia, effectively shortened the perceived distance between city and country.

During the general store era, a shopping trip to Kalamazoo or Battle Creek—or even Vicksburg or Fulton—might well take up a full day, unless you were able to get there by train.

Because such trips were an infrequent luxury, the local general store was an important part of life in the country.

Small by today's standards, many of these general merchandise emporiums stocked just about everything to fill the daily needs of farmers and their families.

Some of these stores were located on, or near, railroads thus increasing the variety of goods they were able to carry, including special orders from Sears & Roebuck or other catalog houses.



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The Big 4 Mercantile Co. in Scotts was probably the largest, as Cloney and Mabel Pease used to describe it as being a place where "...you could buy anything from a safety pin to a plow."

On the other hand, the general store located next to Bond School on 34th Street confined their stock mostly to small hardware, tobacco and candy, as they were located about half way between Scotts and Fulton.

While the assortment of merchandise might have varied,

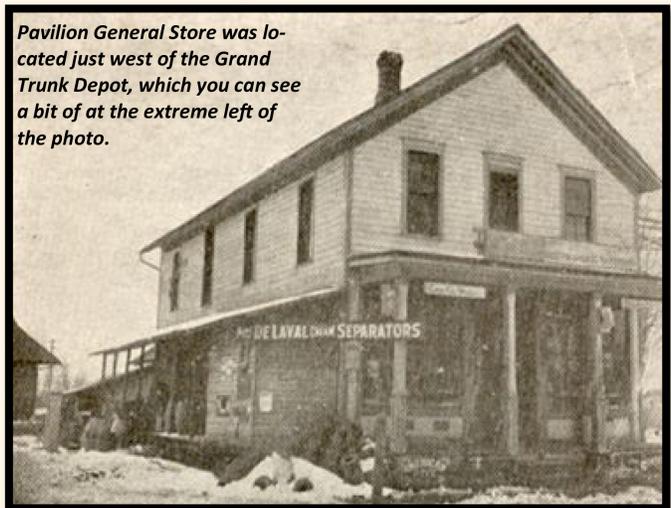
these stores all had one thing in common—they sold whatever their customers would buy.

The general store most likely to be remembered today is the one located near the depot at Pavilion. Alive and well until the early 1950s, it carried a large line of goods, thanks in part to its location next to the railroad.

The Pavilion store stocked household goods, hardware, farm tools, furniture, seed and Groceries, as well as animal feed and supplies.

Down the road a few miles to the east, the general store at McKain's Corners had its heyday a bit earlier in time when "the Corners" was home to a hotel, school, blacksmith shop, dance hall/saloon and post office.

Others no doubt existed, but their histories have been lost to time.



Pavilion General Store was located just west of the Grand Trunk Depot, which you can see a bit of at the extreme left of the photo.



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Vicksburg and Fulton, on the other hand, tended to have more specialized retailers, simply because there were more of them.

But even then you would find a varied inventory based on what customers wanted that no one else in town was selling.

In addition to their retail function, the general store offered a meeting place for isolated people to socialize and do business.

Many also doubled as the first area post office, and some served as rudimentary pharmacies. They offered patent medicines and remedies, along with more traditional pills, solutions and syrups as requested by whatever doctor (or veterinarian) served the area.

Today, we would recognize almost all of the items carried in a typical old fashioned general store—with perhaps the exception of some of the farm tools that have long since been replaced thanks to agricultural mechanization.



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