



Rural Commerce in Context:
South Carolina's Country
Stores, 1850-1950

National Register-Eligible Country Store

SCDOT
US Route 1, Lexington County



What was a Country Store?

- Sold a variety of goods
- Located in rural communities, commonly at crossroad intersections
- Most common building form is a rectangular one-room plan
- Was the social center of a community





Historic Country Stores of South Carolina

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Education

Do you have a favorite BBQ-serving country store? Are you sure to stop in at that ol' mom-and-pop gas station for boiled peanuts on your way to Myrtle Beach?? Did you once buy all your groceries from a rural corner grocery/gas station??? Let us know!



325

About - Suggest an Edit

South Carolina Country Stores and Gas Stations

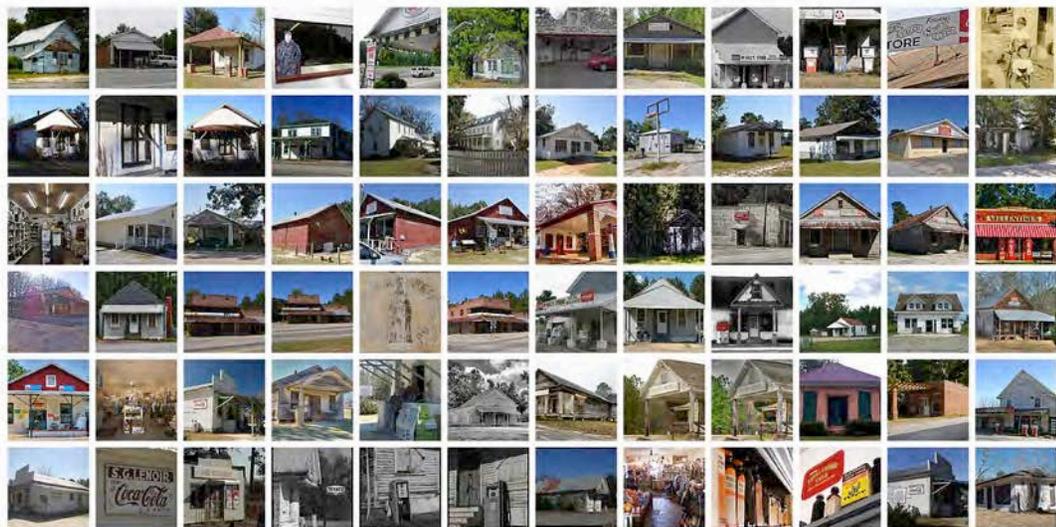
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Historic Country Stores of South Carolina April 11

Happy Friday! Let us know--what is YOUR favorite country store? We have lots of favorites, including E.A. Poole's in Lexington County.



The Social Media APPROACH

B.J. Brant Store in
Ashepool, SC
Ca. 1939



SOUTH CAROLINA
COUNTRY STORE HISTORY

The Antebellum Country Store

- Fewer stores prior to the Civil War
- Wide variety of goods sold
- Typically smaller in size than later stores
- Credit system established during this time
- Storekeeper acted as intermediary between farmer and big city merchants
- Many stores were established as post offices



Holmes-Bailey Store (on first floor of residence),
Edisto Island, ca. 1820

The Economic Importance of the Post-Civil War Country Store

“The shift from slave to free labor;
the rapid expansion of cotton production at the expense of
subsistence crops;
the rise of the town merchant as the principal figure in the
financing and marketing of cotton;
and the emergence of towns as centers of economic
activity, boosterism, and industrial promotion.”

Historian Lacy K. Ford



Florence, SC, 1938



When Cotton Was King 1870-1920

- Cotton was the chief product used for collateral to buy goods at the country store
- Cotton was the ideal crop for the crop lien system
- Country store acted as the local bank
- Debt cycle- 30% to 60% of cotton was obligated for debt by late 1880s
- Goods sold on credit could have a markup as high as 25%



Ruff Stores and Gin, ca. 1860-1947. Ridgeway Historic District, Fairfield County.

The Social Importance of the Country Store

- A community gathering place
- The iconic pot belly stove acted as the physical center of conversation
- Political careers and movements were often started on the porches of stores
- Many country stores were also polling locations



A gathering at a country store in Ellen, SC, in the 1950s.

Country Store Architecture



Tigerville, Greenville County



One-Part Vernacular



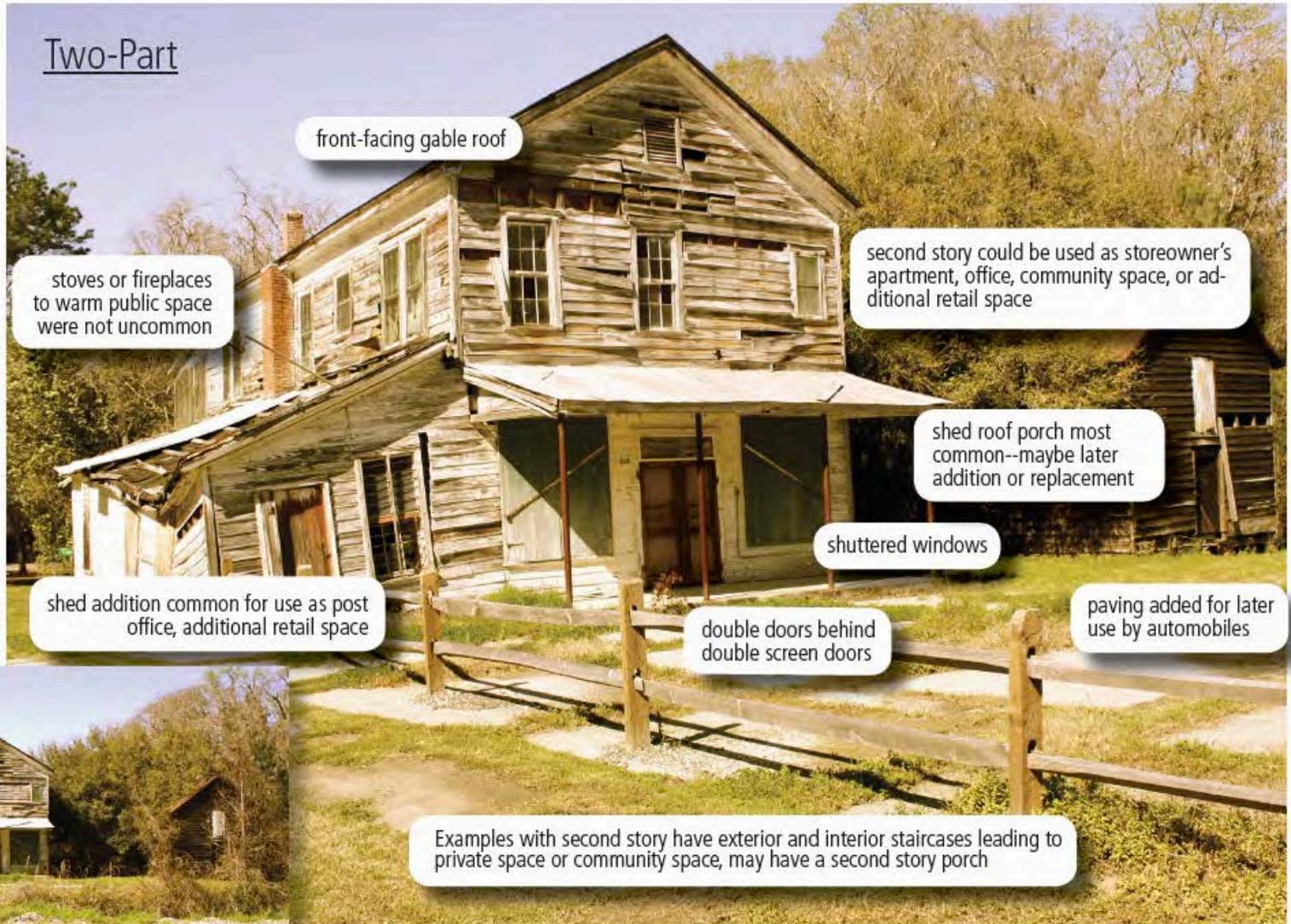
Two-Part Vernacular

- Small flue for stove/chimney
- Porch or canopy
- Some have gas pump/s/ gas pump islands
- Absence of style
- Shed side addition commonly added for post office

Setting

- Small setback from road regardless of size of tract
- Gabled front faces road
- Sited at crossroads, forks, along roads and railroad lines
- No landscaping

Two-Part



front-facing gable roof

stoves or fireplaces to warm public space were not uncommon

second story could be used as storeowner's apartment, office, community space, or additional retail space

shed roof porch most common--maybe later addition or replacement

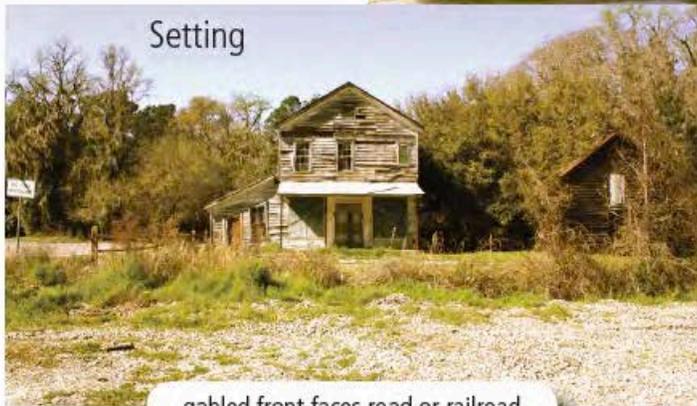
shuttered windows

shed addition common for use as post office, additional retail space

double doors behind double screen doors

paving added for later use by automobiles

Examples with second story have exterior and interior staircases leading to private space or community space, may have a second story porch



Setting

gabled front faces road or railroad

Keyserling General Store
Beaufort County

One- and Two-Part Commercial Block Stores Character-Defining Exterior Features

One-Part



Features

- Masonry Construction
- Narrow Street Frontage
- Symmetrical Storefront
- Topped by Cornice or Parapet
- Urban Overtones
- Hints of Architectural Style
- Decorated Facade
- Porch or Canopy
- Little or No Fenestration on Side Walls
- Details when Present on Facade

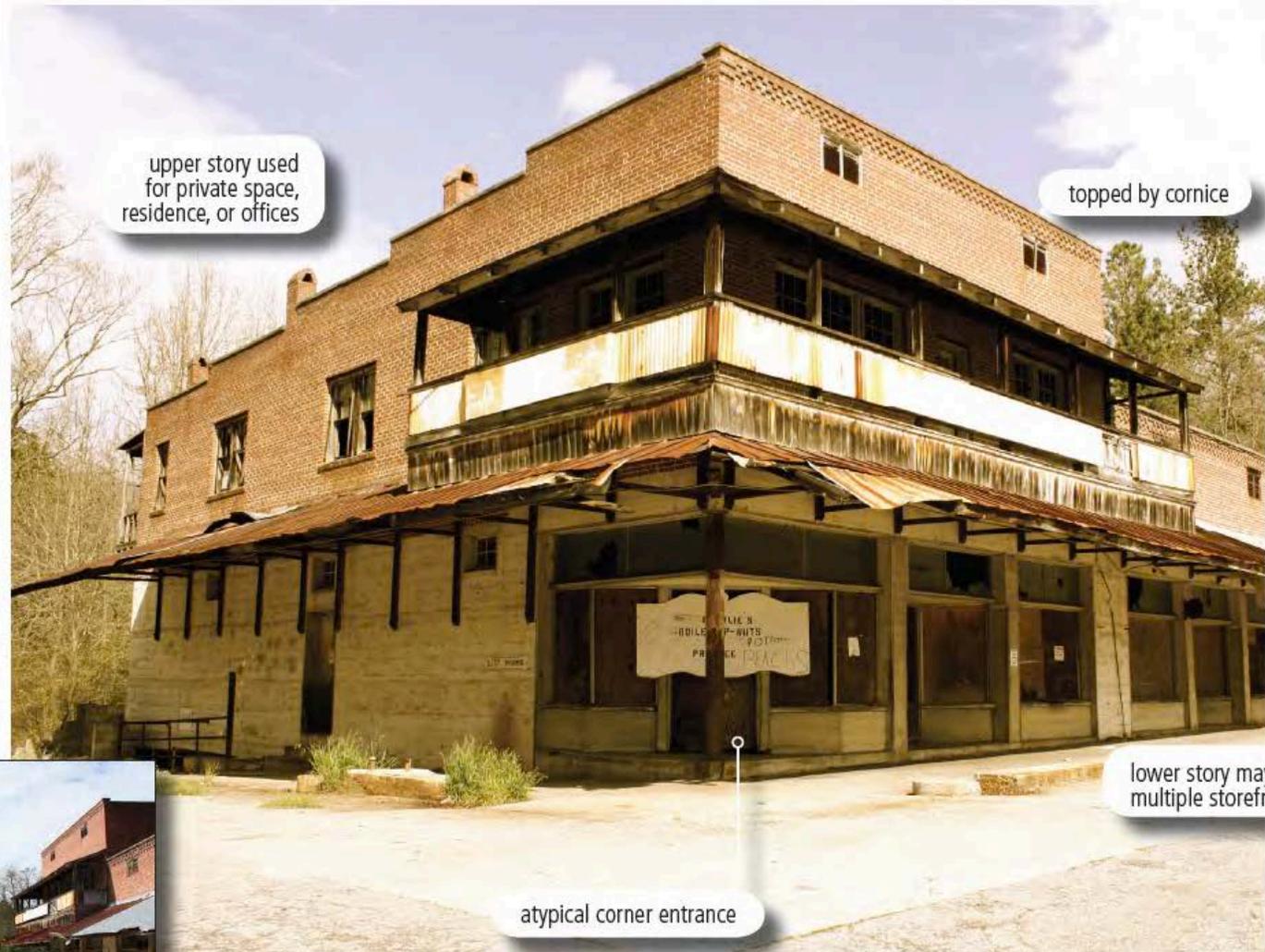


Padgett Store
Edgefield County

Two-Part

Features Continued

- Usually 2 Zones Divided Horizontally
 - Lower Story Used for Commercial Space
 - Upper Story Used for Private Space, Residence, Offices



upper story used for private space, residence, or offices

topped by cornice

lower story may have multiple storefronts

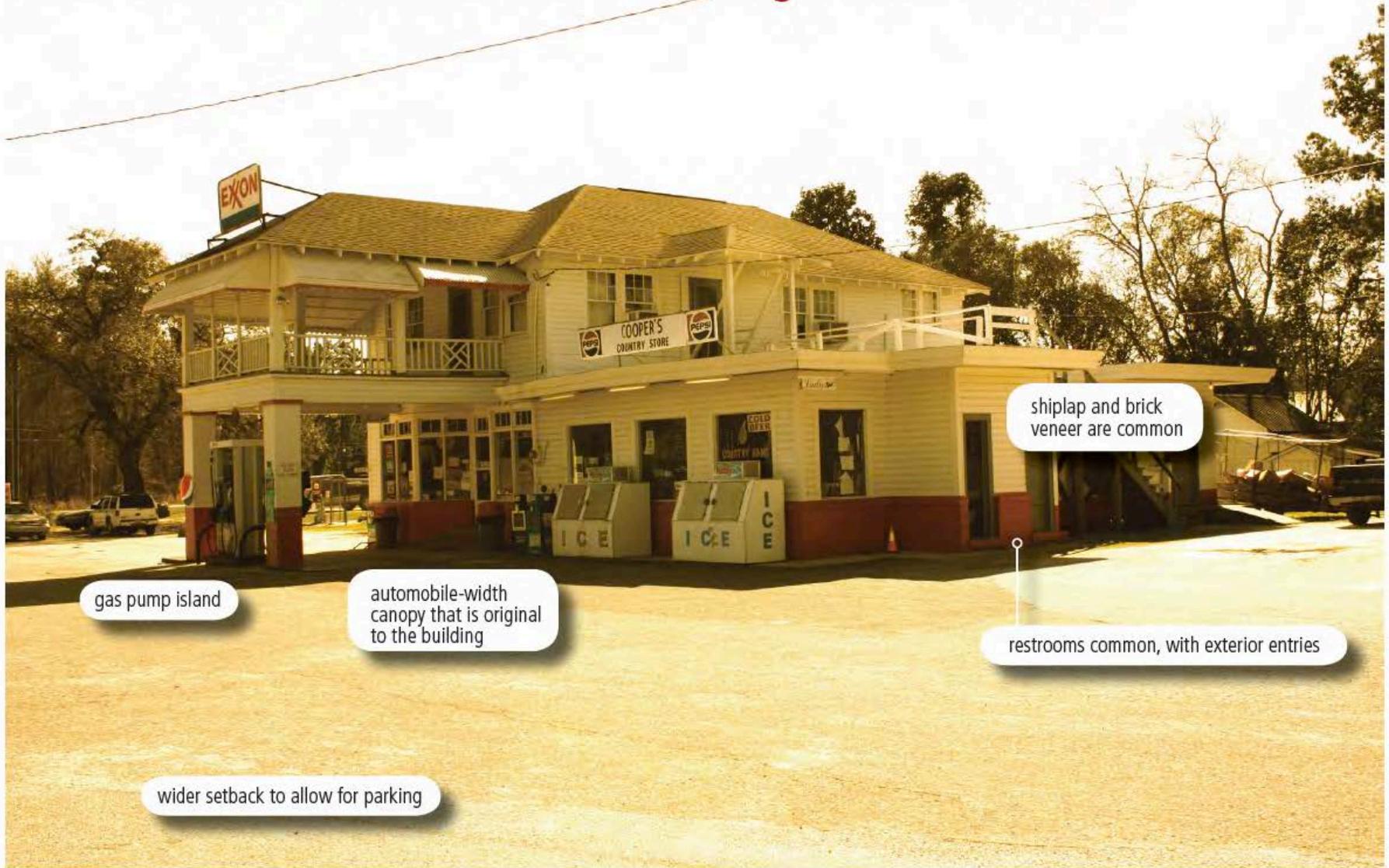
atypical corner entrance

E.A. Poole General Merchandise
Lexington County

Setting



Transitional Autocentric Character-Defining Exterior Features



gas pump island

automobile-width canopy that is original to the building

shiplap and brick veneer are common

restrooms common, with exterior entries

wider setback to allow for parking

Cooper's Country Store
Williamsburg County

*“The external appearance of the average store was as superficial as the hull on a black walnut.
It was the inside that counted” (Clark 1944:39).*





PHYSIOLOGICALLY NEUTRAL
We like this New NON-ACID FORMING FERTILIZER

1936		JULY							1936	
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT				
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26	27	28	29	30	31	•				



1936 JULY 1936

A-218-A7



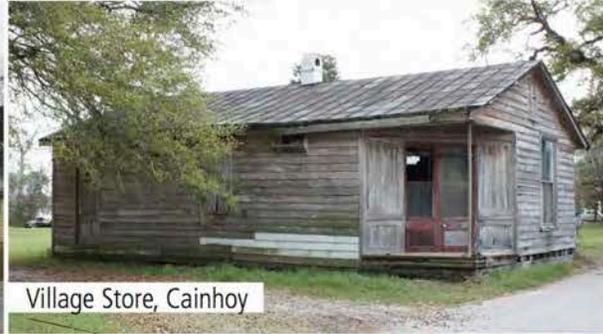
Lenoir Store



T.G. Patrick Store



Coker & Rogers



Village Store, Cainhoy



McDowell Store



Keyserling Store



Ruff Stores

South Carolina's National Register Listed Country Stores

Built in 1869



The Lenoir Store, Horatio, Sumter County



“Community service is what its all about. Service to the people, convenience. Services we can give the people that they appreciate very much, makes life easier for them.”

Mrs. Carrie Lenoir,
Lenoir Store Postmaster, 1942-1976.



Post office established in 1900



Rankin Grocery, Kingsley Hills, Anderson, 2009. Courtesy of V. Lynne Jenkins, Carolina Shots Photography and Fine Art, www.carolinashots.com

“The country store from my youth...”

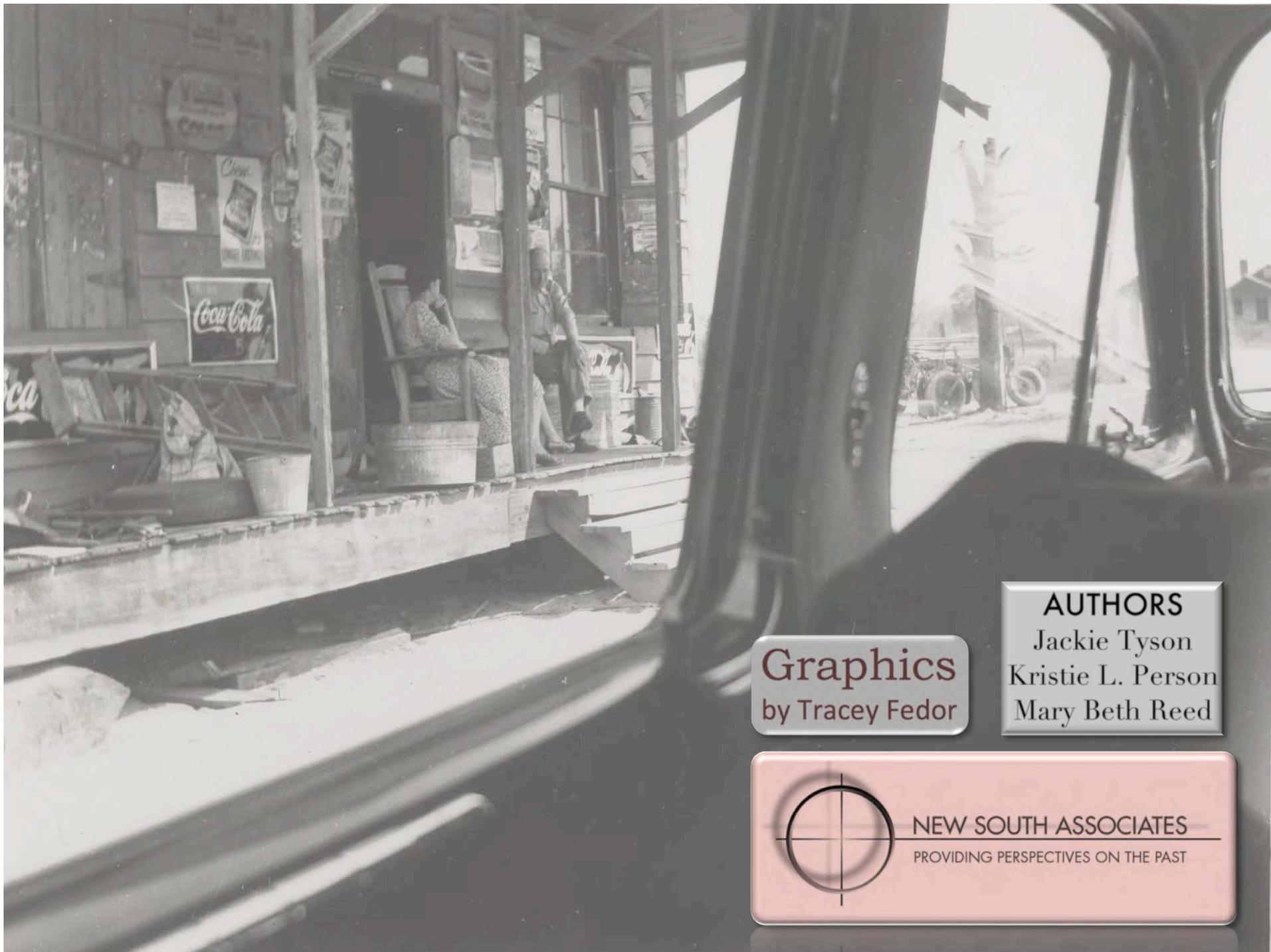
was Raymond Simmons' store in the Bethany Church Community in Anderson County. It was about 1.5 miles from my grandparents' farm, and we would walk down to the store and buy a drink (10 cents) and a snack (crackers, peanuts, Moon Pies, etc). It's where my love of Mountain Dew began. I still have some of the old "Yahoo! It's Mountain Dew!" glass bottles with the Hillbilly on the side. He also sold hoop cheese and overalls; pickled pig's feet and boiled eggs. My grandpa and the other men in the community would hang out there when things were slow around the farm. Good memories!”

- Randy Williamson, SCDOT



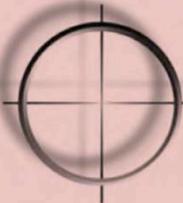
Preserving Country Stores: The Hester Store, ca. 1893 Easley, SC





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PROVIDING PERSPECTIVES ON THE PAST