

BIG STORE
Sumter Crossroads
State Highway 3/U.S. Highway 19 at Croxton Cross Road
Sumter
Sumter County
Georgia

HABS GA-2384
GA-2384

HABS
GA-2384

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
SOUTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
100 Alabama St. NW
Atlanta, GA 30303

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BIG STORE (Sumter Crossroads)

HABS GA-2384

Location: State Highway 3/U.S. Highway 19 at Croxton Cross Road
Sumter, Sumter County, Georgia
USGS 7.5 minute Smithville West, Georgia quadrangle
Universal Transverse Mercator coordinates:
16.759384.3438106

HABS
GA-2384

Date of Development: 1890-1923

Engineer: None

Builder: Unknown

Present Owner: Charlene Railey Hall
Cobb, Sumter County, Georgia

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Big Store is part of the rural crossroads community of Sumter in Sumter County. The community contains five commercial buildings including two stores (HABS GA-2384 & HABS GA-2385), a filling station (HABS GA-2386), a cotton gin (HABS GA-2387), and a seed house (HABS GA-12) that will be moved or demolished in 2006. The commercial buildings are arranged along the east side of U.S. Highway 19 and to the west of Norfolk Southern Railroad tracks surrounded by agricultural fields in southern Sumter County. One house is also included in the district and is located on the west side of U.S. Highway 19. The Big Store is located on the northeast corner of U.S. Highway 19 and Sumter City Road and is a significant example of a rural store that served the needs of the farming families in this area of Sumter County.

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Introduction

The Sumter Crossroads Historic District is a rural crossroads community in Sumter County. The small district is located along U.S. Highway 19 to the north and south of Croxton Cross Road and to the north of Lower Five Points Road/County Road 304. The district contains five commercial buildings including two stores (HABS GA-2384 & HABS GA-2385), a filling station (HABS GA-2386), a cotton gin (HABS GA-2387), and a seed house (HABS GA-12). The farm house located across U.S. Highway 19 was the residence of Charles B. Railey (HABS GA-15-A), owner and operator of the Sumter Merchantile Store (HABS GA-2385) from 1922 to 1973. Mr. Railey also owned the Big Store.

The area is referred to by the residents as Sumter and is shown as such on maps. However, to avoid confusion with the county, it will be referred to as Sumter Crossroads in this document.

Background

Sumter Crossroads first appears on a county map in 1864 and most likely was created as a railroad stop.¹ Alan Anderson, Sumter County Historian, establishes its founding as June 1856 which was two years after the railroad came to Americus. The Georgia and Florida Railroad had been chartered in 1852 and had completed approximately 25 miles of track south of Americus before being purchased in 1857 by the Southwestern Railroad.² Long time residents of Sumter remember a group of railroad worker cottages, a mule barn and a foreman's house located on the eastern side of the tracks at Sumter. None of these structures remain today. Sumter continued to be a railroad "flag stop" until the 1950s.

Since the surrounding area had been farmed since the 1830s and the "post road" was located in the path of present day U.S. Highway 19, this area was a reasonable location for a cotton gin and store that would serve as the center of the rural community built on collaboration and reciprocity. The road—and latter the railroad—served as a farm to market and farm to courthouse highway. After World War I, the road would be paved to allow the ever increasing number of automobiles to flock to Florida.³ Locals continued to walk or ride on mule-drawn carriages to conduct business in Sumter City.

Buildings in a rural setting tend to focus on action and it is easy to imagine these buildings as the focus of everyday life in Sumter. Like a smaller version of a county seat town, these buildings were a point of information exchange. Because the surrounding area is virtually flat and these buildings are grouped together with little surrounding vegetation, they are visible from surrounding fields and this adds to their importance. They also appear very symmetrical and ordered.

There are five commercial buildings located in Sumter and these buildings along with Liberty Primitive Baptist Church comprise the core of the crossroads community. These commercial buildings are organized along the railroad tracks on the east side of U.S. Highway 19 and are wood framed. Liberty Primitive Baptist Church is located to the south and on the west side of U.S. Highway 19 and will not be affected by the road widening project.

¹ University of Georgia, Carl Vinson Institute of Government, Historical Atlas of Georgia Counties, available at <http://www.cviog.uga.edu/Projects/gainfo/histcountymaps/ga1864map.htm>, accessed September 12, 2005.

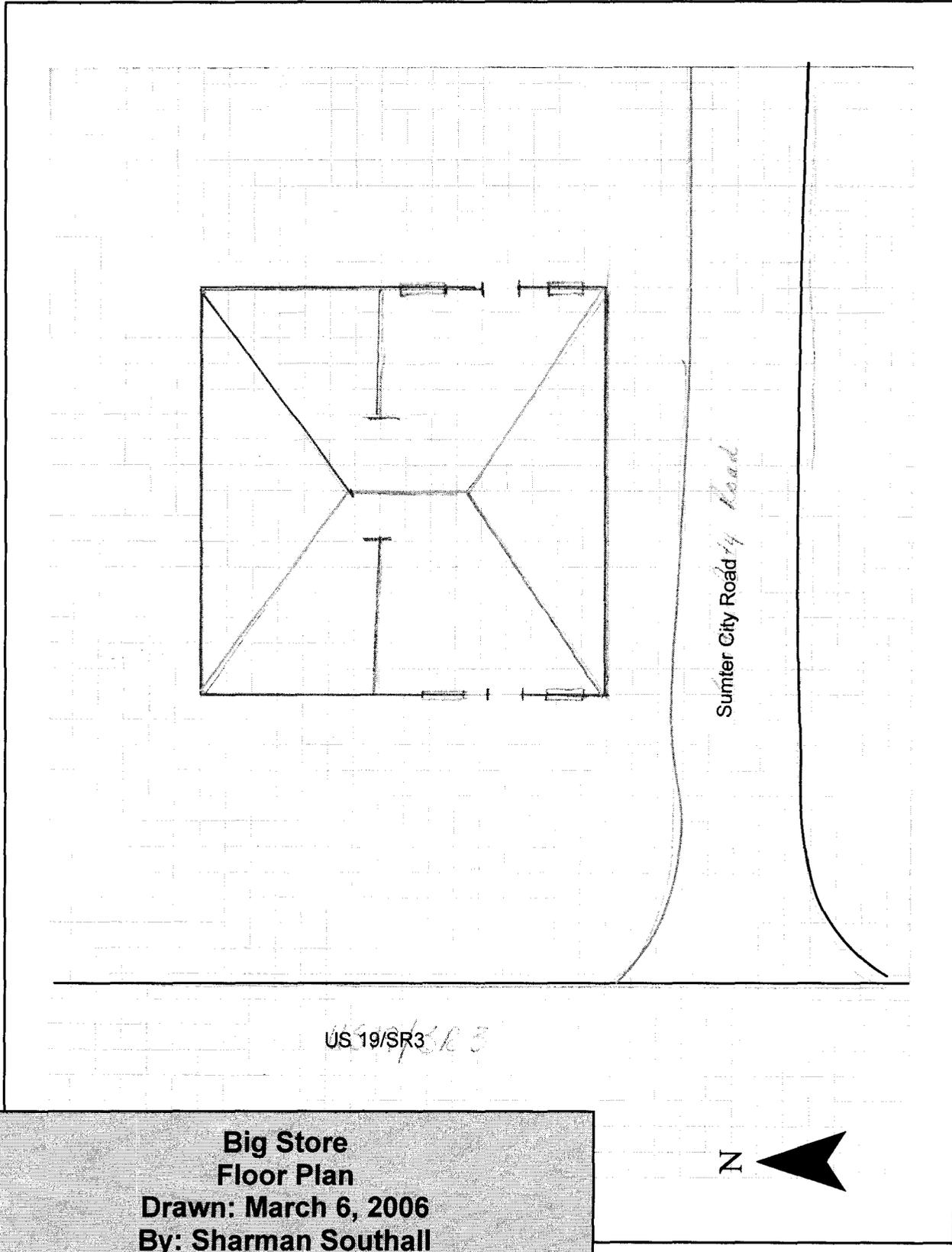
² Cox, Jack F., 1983 History of Sumter County, Georgia, W. H. Wolfe Associates, Roswell, Georgia, 1983, 27.

³ Georgia Department of Transportation, Georgia's Maps through the Years, Atlanta, Georgia, 1983, 3-8.

The two store buildings are constructed of timber and have served multiple business purposes. Buildings can be located on the 1910 map and are identified as “Webb Brothers” a commercial enterprise run by the Webb family which included the gin and stores.⁴

The Big Store is located across Sumter City Road from Sumter Merchantile (HABS GA-2385). This timber frame building is distinguished by a pyramidal shaped metal roof, board and batten door and window shutters and a brick pier foundation. The board and batten door is asymmetrically placed on the western elevation and is flanked by window openings that have been shuttered. An identical arrangement exists on the eastern elevation. The building has no other door or window openings

⁴ Parsons Brinckerhoff, “Historic Resources Survey Report: Webb Family Farm Avoidance Alternative” (unpublished manuscript on file with the Georgia Department of Transportation’s Office of Environment/Location, Atlanta, Georgia), 2002, 31.



**Big Store
Floor Plan
Drawn: March 6, 2006
By: Sharman Southall**

