

Fuller's Store Center

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Center emerged as the “center” of the Island, both geographically and culturally, in the 1880s. This did not last long as Burton and Dockton emerged as the dominant commercial centers in the 1890s and, by 1900, Vashon Town had eclipsed them all as the commercial and social center of the Island.

The Baptists opened the first church on the island on the southeast corner of Center where the Zarth/McFeed building stands, and the first school on the island opened just behind the church. The first store at Center opened in 1884 on the northwest corner, where The Vashon Island Coffee Roasterie is located, after a short stay at the corner of SW 188th and 91st SW. The second store at Center was built in 1885 on the southwest corner by George and Hattie Fuller and named the Old Reliable Store. Together, these two stores, the church, and the school made Center indeed the first commercial and social center of the Island.

The Old Reliable Store is a great example of rural vernacular architecture with a “boomtown” or “false front” which lacks formal detailing and conceals the true roofline, giving the building the appearance of more mass.

The Fullers added a house to the south of the store between 1886 and 1891, and when George died in 1891 Hattie continued to operate the store until 1910, when she sold the building to R.H. Holmes, who added an addition on the north side for use as a meat market, bakery and barbershop. Harry Davis bought the store in 1915 and in 1921 closed the store and sold the building to Otto Terkelsen. Terkelsen converted it to use for his trucking business and built a raised, covered loading dock on the north side.

When Cemetery Road was widened in 1926, the north 16 feet of the building was removed and the loading dock was re-built by Therkesen. When he died in 1971 the building was converted to retail use again. In the succeeding decades the building has served as Second Time Around Antiques (the 1970s), Books by the Way (the 1980s), Owen's Antiques (the 1990s) and, until just recently, Reliable Wines and Macrina Bakery. These days called The Old Fuller Store, it continues to serve as retail space.

In many ways the building remains much the same as it was after the 1926 “remodel.” It has been restored and painted, but the juniper tree to the right remains, only 50 years older and much fuller and taller. The power pole to the right of the building is in the same location with street signs added. The walnut trees, originally planted in the 1890s by Philip McCormick, are 50 years older and much larger.



Philip was a plant salesman who came to Vashon in 1896 on a sales trip, but met the Fuller’s daughter Isabelle, fell in love, married, and began the McCormick clan on Vashon. The Cottage Shop Gifts, across the street, is now the Vashon Island Coffee Roasterie. The porch has been shortened, but the building is much the same as it was in the 1970s. And the trees along Vashon Highway have grown and closed in the roadway.



Except for the modern stop sign, crosswalks, an expanded roadway and different signage, the building remains much as it was in the 1880s. The current photograph shows the building as it is today.

1970s Photograph - Vashon-Maury Island Heritage Association
Current Photograph – Terry Donnelly