

## Red Front

Prior to 1878, Gilbert Schooling, a prominent Sarcoxie entrepreneur, operated a pioneer mercantile and a hotel in the frame structure situated where the Red Front would be constructed. As his business grew so did the need for a larger building. Schooling had the Red Front building constructed. The newly constructed building extended beyond the current building. At that time, the building overshadowed the other frame structures located on the south side of the Sarcoxie Square. The Red Front had a second floor where other rooms were available. Mrs. S.M. Molloy was one of the seamstresses that worked from the second floor.

In 1913, Schooling sold the building to two gentlemen, Salem Goodner and Henry Sabert. Goodner was a doctor and financier. Sabert was an entrepreneur that dabbled in several business ventures in Sarcoxie. Sabert incorporated the business as the Red Front Mercantile Company and became the primary stockholder. Other stockholders over the years included James D. Moore, Allan Moore, Edison Sabert, J.D. Birkhead, Will Edwards, etc.

Under Sabert's ownership, Allan and Martha Moore, brother and sister, became involved with the Red Front. Allan owned stock and drove the delivery wagon for Sabert. Martha began working as a clerk in 1902.

In 1919, William DelaRue and his son, Percy, bought the dry goods and shoe department from Sabert. Sabert retained the west side of the building which contained his grocery store. (This was located where Velten now has his storage to the west of the library) At that time, Sabert's Grocery and the Red Front were separated by a large door, allowing customers to have access to both buildings. Over the years that opening was closed. Huge glass windows covered the front of the building. Originally the Red Front extended into what is now the adjacent building. DelaRue remodeled the back of the store, adding 2 dressing rooms. The Red Front Mercantile was well known throughout the area. It carried the largest stock of ready to wear clothing and the latest fashions. Mrs. Hoyt Osborn was put in charge of the ready to wear department. In October 1932, DelaRue abruptly closed the store and moved to Bolivar asking Martha to go with him to help run the new store, which she did. (Martha was an extremely important sales clerk.) This abrupt closing of the Red Front greatly depressed the business relations in the community.

However, by February 1933, Ed Pelsue, cousin to Allan and Martha, encouraged them to join him in reviving the Sarcoxie Red Front store. Allan returned as part owner and Miss Martha as the manager. Any millinery item, piece of clothing or shoes desired or needed could be purchased at Moore's Red Front. Customers tried on their items in dressing rooms at the back of the building. The ladies dressing room was under the mezzanine on the right and the men's dressing room was near the back on the left. Benches were placed along the front of the store in front of the large windows so those waiting might sit down.

Miss Martha often traveled to search out the latest fashions. Her trademark was the numerous stylish hats she wore. She was seldom seen without a fancy hat atop her head. She was awarded the first Professional Business Women's, "Woman of the Year Award" in 1958. Miss Martha was a business woman way ahead of her time.

During the “strawberry boom”, merchandise could be paid for with strawberry coins. The sales clerk received payments. Then, payment was placed in a basket connected to a long cable. The basket was transported to the office on the second floor of the building along this cable. Strawberry coins were then taken to the local bank and the bank would issue money.

Jim Moore, Allan’s son, joined the business in 1952 where he remained until the business closed in November 1961. While he managed the store, he set up a toy department on the mezzanine. Jim was able to get a contract from the Schwinn Bike Company so bikes could be sold. Jim Moore indicated that the entire second level contained toys. Lazy Bones shoes, parasols, dinnerware, linens were sold along with many well-known brands of garments. These were only a few of the wide assortment of goods one could purchase. The Moore Family operated the store for 33 years.

Mr. and Mrs. Claud Smith purchased the building in 1965. Their plan was to remodel and enlarge their appliance, heating and plumbing business. They set up living quarters on the second level. Other businesses included Steven’s Western Auto operated the late 70’s.

Scott and Toni McKay bought the building in 1984. While living there, they planned to restore the building. Their dream was never fulfilled.

When the building became available, Friends of the Library representative, Judy Baker, approached City Council regarding the purchase of a larger building for the Sarcoxie Library. Friends of the Library purchased the building from McKay and transfer of deed to the city to be used as Sarcoxie’s library occurred in March 1992. The facility was painted and made ready for Jeannine Wormington, the librarian in charge, to make the move. In May 1993, with the street closed, many helped the library move to its present location.

Information revised Feb. 2022 by Michelle Gautz, Sarcoxie Chamber Historical Center