

## Dan Hohman – Sugar Creek

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

“This reuben sandwich,” said the New Yorker, “is better than we get back in New York.” That is high praise, for this sandwich comes from a store in the middle of the country. Not only does this place provide great sandwiches, it provides the experience of entering an old-time general store with lots of classic products. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Dan Hohman is founder and owner of Sugar Creek Country Store in St. Marys, Kansas. In 1992, Dan and his wife Jen relocated their family from Pennsylvania to St. Marys because of the school system. They were seeking the traditional Catholic education that is offered at the St. Marys Academy.

Dan's background was in the industrial hydraulics business. After coming to Kansas, he eventually launched his own company which specializes in recruiting engineers and technical sales people for the fluid power industry. For more information, see [www.fluidpowerjobs.com](http://www.fluidpowerjobs.com).

One year when Dan and Jen went to visit their oldest daughter in Minnesota, they came across something remarkable. It was like an old time country store furnished with Amish goods and located out in the middle of nowhere. Dan thought that a store with those types of goods would be a wonderful addition to his hometown of St. Marys.

When he got back to Kansas, Dan connected with a local businessman and investor named Ken Moats and explained his vision to Ken. Ken ended up buying and renovating a historic downtown building. This became the location of Dan's store.

“We wanted to create a design like a general store in the early 1900s,”

Dan said. He had learned that the original St. Marys Mission to the native Americans was located at Sugar Creek, Kansas, near the Missouri border. After facing a number of challenges there, the priests had prayed for guidance and come north to relocate the mission along the Kansas River in 1848. Eventually the town of St. Marys grew at this new location.

Using the historic name Sugar Creek, Dan set out to create the new store. He connected with Amish vendors and consulted with the Kansas Small Business Development Center. Ken Moats worked on renovating the old historic building.

“Ken was wonderful,” Dan said. “We found this beautiful, native stone wall on the west side of the building. I suggested we put a window in the inside wall so people could see it,” Dan said. “Ken said, ‘No, let's not cover it up at all.’” The stone wall was painstakingly restored and now is attractively lit for display. Several original columns and the original wood floor are beautifully restored and in place.

Sugar Creek Country Store opened in July 2016. It specializes in bulk foods, classic food items, a deli and specialty groceries. “We want to offer great quality products at a reasonable price,” Dan said. “We get many products from the Amish, because they have lots of simple, good-tasting foods without a bunch of preservatives,” he said.

This includes Amish deli meats, cheeses, and sauerkraut. Together with select marble rye bread, this creates the reuben sandwich which was proclaimed by one New Yorker to be better than those from the Big Apple. The deli offers various kinds of ham,

beef, turkey, bologna and specialty meats. Cheeses include traditional swiss, smoked, cheddar, hot cheeses, and more.

Bulk foods include lots of goods and spices. The store offers party trays, gift boxes, and specialty items like Rada knives.

“Every one of our ten children, either directly or indirectly, has had a hand in this store,” Dan said. His four youngest children are now working in the business. The goal is excellent customer service. “We go above and beyond to make sure our customers feel like they are part of the family,” Dan said. It’s added a new attraction to the rural community of St. Marys, population 2,627 people. Now, that’s rural.

For more information, go to [www.sugarcreekcountrystore.com](http://www.sugarcreekcountrystore.com).

For a New York-style reuben that tops New York, one can visit the Sugar Creek Country Store in St. Marys. We commend Dan Hohman and family for making a difference by blending modern entrepreneurship with great sandwiches and a trip back in time.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.