

#1: The Warsaw Community Building (181 West Harrison Street)

The Community Building has been a central part of the Warsaw community since 1936 when it was built using 38 men employed with WPA (Work Progress Administration) labor using native stone donated from the Lay Quarry, west of town. More information can be found on the WPA at the County Museum.

The Bishop Gunstock Factory occupied the lower level (now called The Harbor Room) of this building for many years before moving to their own building in 1990. Today the building is used as a community center and houses the police department, the Warsaw Chamber of Commerce and Benton County Tourism. Dozens of events are held here annually.

Warsaw had two major industries in the early days; the button factory and the tie yards. The button factory was located on the riverfront, back of the former Ackers hatchery. Boats went out each morning and the muscle shells were picked off the gravel shoals by shovel like forks. The shells were placed in steam vats to remove the insides and also to spot a lurking pearl. Button blanks were cut on machines and there were about 15 machine operators.

Warsaw was burned for the first time on November 22, 1861 by Union Army stragglers.

Warsaw was occupied by Union troops and the courthouse was staffed by Union sympathizers. However, on November 7, 1863, the dashing and impetuous Colonel Joe Shelby came to Warsaw. Union soldiers on this side of the river were drawn up in battle to keep the confederates from crossing. Shelby's troops charged across the river and soon the Stars and Bars again flung their folds from this spot.

Shelby's men tore out courthouse records recorded under Union jurisprudence they set fire to buildings which contained Union records and stores of goods and again Main Street burned on November 8 and 9, 1863.

As you stand at the corner of Main and Van Buren streets, you will see a friendly Missouri town, known formerly as the "Gunstock and Spoonbill Capitals of the World". At the hub of this charming Ozark town in central Missouri is the main business district of Warsaw, located at the joining two of Missouri's man-made lakes, Truman and Lake of the Ozarks. Warsaw backed up to the bend of the Osage River during the 1830's. Since that time Main Street has been host to river boat captains, Civil War soldiers, stagecoach passengers and Harry S Truman. Settled in the 1820's Warsaw was chartered in 1837. The ground was once a part of Spain and of France, prior to the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.

People lived in this area as long as 10,000 years ago according to archaeological research. This was the home of the Shawnee, Osage and Kickapoo Indians. The riverfront trails are named after these Indian tribes.

It was here that countless wagon trains were supplied on their way to the southwest, and it was here that hundreds of steamboats docked, bringing supplies from St. Louis to be freighted south by ox team and wagon.

You are also on the Main Street of a Confederate town burned twice during the War between the States, a town denounced on the floor of the 1863 Missouri Senate as "one of the great central depots of treason" in Missouri.

Through the tour you are about to take, perhaps you will understand a bit more about Warsaw's past, present and future.