

Walks through History
Benton Commercial Historic District
Begin at the Saline County Courthouse, 200 N. Main Street, Benton
March 21, 2015
By: Rachel Silva



Intro

Good morning, my name is Rachel Silva, and I work for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. Welcome to the “Walks through History” tour of downtown Benton. I’d like to thank the Saline County Library and the Saline County History and Heritage Society for co-sponsoring today’s tour. Refreshments will be available at the History & Heritage Society toward the end of the tour. I especially want to recognize Steve Perdue for his help with the tour. And many thanks to Saline County Judge Jeff Arey for opening the courthouse this morning.

This tour is worth two hours of HSW continuing education credit through the American Institute of Architects. See me after the tour if you’re interested.

The Benton Commercial Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2008 for its association with the development of Benton and its collection of late 19th and early 20th century commercial-style architecture. Three buildings in the historic district are individually listed in the National Register—the Saline County Courthouse, Independent Order of Odd Fellows Building, and the Royal Theatre. We will also see the National Register-listed Gann Office Building (Gann Museum) and Gann House as well as the Arkansas Register-listed Palace Theatre.

Saline County Courthouse (NR-listed 11/22/1976)—

Saline County was created on November 2, 1835, by Arkansas's Territorial Legislature. The county was named for the salt works established here during the early 19th century and for the Saline River, which has its source in the northwestern part of the county. Benton, named in honor of Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton (who worked diligently for Arkansas statehood), became the county seat because of its central location along the Southwest Trail and larger population. The current Saline County Courthouse is the third courthouse to occupy this site. Historically, a stand-alone jail building was also on this block until 1908, when a two-story, brick jail was erected at the southeast corner of N. Main and E. Sevier streets (location of old post office).

Construction of the present Saline County Courthouse began in November 1901 and was completed in August 1902. The Romanesque Revival-style building was designed by well-known Little Rock architect Charles L. Thompson. Little Rock contractor John S. Odum built the courthouse for \$31,000. Romanesque Revival characteristics include the use of rounded arches above window and door openings and multiple towers of different shapes and sizes.

In 1939 two one-story wings were added to the courthouse—one on the north side, which housed the county jail, and one on the south side, which provided extra office space. This happened the same year that the post office was constructed on the former jail site. In 1983 a new jail wing was added to the north side of the Saline County Courthouse (current north annex). The county built a new jail southeast of downtown Benton about 2007. The one-story addition (from 1939) was removed from the south side of the courthouse in 1995 when renovations on the building began.

Interesting note: The streets bordering the courthouse square on the north and south--Conway and Sevier--were named in honor of Arkansas Governor James S. Conway and his cousin, U.S. Senator Ambrose Sevier, who were key players in Arkansas's 19th century political dynasty known as "The Family."

Go inside courthouse to see WPA mural—The mural now hanging in the courthouse was commissioned by the Works Progress Administration Federal Art Project, which put artists to work during the Great Depression. Participating artists, the majority of whom were on federal relief rolls, created art for public buildings across the country. This mural by artist Julius Woeltz was originally installed in 1942 at Benton’s U.S. Post Office at Main and Sevier streets and depicts local bauxite miners. Central Arkansas is the only place in the continental U.S. where it is feasible to commercially mine bauxite ore, which is used to make aluminum. Bauxite mining in Saline County reached its peak during World War II, when this mural was painted.

Gazebo—The gazebo was funded and built in 1986 by the Saline County Board of Realtors and the Saline County Home Builders Association in celebration of the sesquicentennial anniversary of Arkansas statehood. In the early 20th century, a bandstand was located southeast of the courthouse (on the lawn).

N. Main across from courthouse, going south—

221 N. Main (Vote Here Building)—There were two houses on the northern half of this block until the mid-20th century. One of those houses was moved about a block to the northwest corner of Conway and N. East streets and is still there today. The current building was constructed in the 1950s to house a Goodyear Service Store.

215-219 N. Main (county annex)—Built in 1956 by Benton businessman Henry Caldwell. Initially housed Caldwell and Jimmy Turnage’s Home Supply Company, a furniture and appliance store. By the early 1960s, it was OTASCO (Oklahoma Tire and Supply Company) Home Supply, Inc. (appliance store). It has been a county annex building since the late 1990s.

201 N. Main (Cleo’s Furniture)—In the early 20th century, there was a blacksmith and woodworking shop at the northeast corner of Main and Sevier. By 1930, there was a filling station on this site. The Benton Bus Terminal later occupied the

corner and was replaced in 1956 by the current building, which was constructed by Ernest Ward to house West Department Store. It has been Cleo's Furniture since the early '90s.

Point to east down E. Sevier Street (behind Cleo's)--

108-110-112 E. Sevier (A. V. Martin Building, 1924)—By 1930, the post office was located in the first floor of the westernmost portion of the Martin Building (closest to Cleo's), and the Broadway Hotel was located in the upper story. Later, the building was home to Smart Chevrolet, Crawford Chevrolet, Spivey Chevrolet, and Beavers Supply (different time periods).

Point to 113 E. Sevier (across from Martin Building and behind old post office)—built in 1946 and was Thomas Auto Company.

West on Sevier Street—

108-112-114 W. Sevier (Law Offices, etc.)—Built ca. 1910 and housed a variety of things, including restaurants (Lonestar Café in 1936 and Courthouse Café in 1960s), dry cleaners, a grocery store, and auto repair. In the 1940s, the storefront at 112 W. Sevier (Burns Law Firm) was the New Theater. Henry Caldwell's OTASCO store was located at 108 W. Sevier until 1956, when he moved to the new building at 215 N. Main.

Empty lot—This was the location of Gingles Bankrupt Store, a bargain version of Gingles Department Store. The name was later changed to Gingles Family Center. The building burned in 1975.

South on Market Street, talking about buildings on east side of street—

125 Market (Saline County Republican Headquarters)--Stinson Building, built in 1913 by local jeweler E. Y. Stinson. Mr. Stinson operated his jewelry store in this storefront. He specialized in watchmaking, jewelry, and eyeglasses. In 1903

Stinson helped establish Benton's first electric light and power plant. This storefront was later home to Ernest Parker's Drug Store and Soda Fountain for many years. In more recent memory, the first floor was occupied by The Fashion Ladies Ready-to-Wear and later, Carson's Music Store. Attorneys Kenneth Coffelt and John L. Hughes had offices in the upper story of this building.

Independent Order of Odd Fellows Building, 123 Market (NR-listed 5/26/2004)—now the History & Heritage Society:

Built in 1913 by E. Y. Stinson and purchased in 1914 by Saline Lodge No. 174, I.O.O.F., which was organized at Benton in 1901. Corona Lodge No. 130, a semi-military organization under the Odd Fellows umbrella, shared the lodge space. In addition to the lodge names, the building's cornerstone features some interesting symbols. The three links of a chain and the letters "F. L. T." below it symbolize the three-link fraternity of friendship, love, and truth. The engraving of an eyeball symbolizes the all-seeing eye of God. The Odd Fellows sought to help people who were sick or less fortunate, especially mothers and children.

The Odd Fellows sold the first floor of the building in 1921 and it became Saline Hardware and Furniture, run by Tom Holiman. By the early 1940s, the hardware store was operated by Dewell and Bernice Stirmon ("Stearman"). Saline Hardware remained open until the 1980s. In 2002 the Stirmon's daughters and their husbands donated the building to Saline County. It is now the Saline County History and Heritage Society's research room. Offices for Beard Engineering are located upstairs. [The Odd Fellows lodge is still active but is now located in a building at East and Sevier.]

119 Market (Kelley Building, 1917)—In the 1920s, this building housed an auto garage with a 40-car capacity. At that time, the next two buildings to the south had not been built, and the area south of the Kelley Building along Market Street was a wagon yard and had platforms for the sale of cotton. **Was the Mrs. J. G. Kelley Dry Goods Store located here in the 1930s?**

115 Market (Twigs)—built ca. 1940 and had two storefronts. In the mid-1950s, Lonnie Tull’s Family Shoe Store moved from its location on W. South Street to this building. The storefront was remodeled at that time (turned into one storefront with a recessed entrance). After Family Shoe Store, this building housed Fletcher Music, Leave it to Liz, a church, and now Twigs Petals & More.

109-111-113 Market (Masonic Building, 1930)—This building was constructed in 1930 to house Benton Masonic Lodge No. 34, which was chartered in 1850. The façade of the Masonic Building features cast-stone detailing with floral and geometric patterns as well as a prominent Masonic square and compass symbol with the letter “G” for God. The Masons used the top floor as their lodge hall and rented the lower storefronts. The Style Shop (ladies’ and misses’ ready-to-wear) opened in a storefront of this building in 1935. The shop was owned by Myrtle Cunningham and Ruth Dunnahoo.

**Cross Market Street to talk about east side of W. South—
North side of W. South Street, moving east**

145 W. South (Gingles Department Store; now Books & Baubles)—At the turn of the 20th century, the wood-frame J. M. Caldwell Dry Goods and Grocery was located at this corner. By 1915, Caldwell had replaced his wood-frame building with the current brick structure. Notice the nameplate on the current brick building reads “J. M. Caldwell.” Henry J. Gingles moved to Benton in 1922 from Houston, Texas. He entered the J. G. Kelley Store as part-owner and general manager (Mrs. J. G. Kelley was his sister). Gingles soon made a profit by selling locally grown produce and meats to a larger market. In 1926 he opened a grocery store to go along with the general store. In 1930 Gingles and his sister, Mrs. J. G. Kelley, opened the Benton Wholesale Grocery Company, the first wholesale grocery business in Saline County. In 1932 Mr. Gingles bought the Kelley interest in the wholesale grocery and changed the name to the H. J. Gingles Store. He eventually bought out competitors in Benton and opened stores at Sheridan and Bauxite. His main store was here at 145 W. South and handled dry goods, shoes, ready-to-wear, and groceries (including fresh fruits and vegetables and choice

meats). This became Gingles Department Store. The building was remodeled in the 1950s and a rear addition was constructed between this building and the Masonic Building. Gingles closed in 2003.

Dianne Roberts has her art studio and gallery inside the Gingles Building today. She researched and drew the new mural, which we'll see in a minute.

117-119 W. South (Bush Drug & Bush Jewelry; now McClain & Co.)—The building at 117 W. South (right side; main entrance to McClain & Co.) was built in 1883 by Frederick W. Bush and is the oldest brick commercial building in downtown Benton. Bush was born in Germany and was the nephew of John W. Shoppach. Although F. W. Bush spent his formative years in Europe, he arrived at Benton in 1855 and became a prominent druggist and apothecary. He built the Bush Drug Store in 1883, followed shortly by the brick building at 119 W. South (left side; was built by 1896). The second building housed Bush's Jewelry Store. The buildings are excellent examples of late 19th century commercial-style architecture with brick corbelling at the cornice, recessed brick panels, cast-iron storefront components, pressed tin ceilings, and tile floors. Bush Drug Store eventually occupied both buildings. The lunch counter area was in the back. In the 1940s, Family Shoe Store was located in the left-hand portion before it moved to 115 N. Market. Interesting note: Bush's Drug Store was known as the "Iron Palace" because of the iron storefront columns.

115 W. South (Hughes Building, Farmers and Merchants National Bank, ca. 1918; now Edward Jones)—Built ca. 1918 by the Hughes family to house the Farmers and Merchants National Bank. This bank probably closed after the Stock Market Crash of 1929. By the 1930s, the building housed a billiard hall and bar. The original façade featured a raised parapet and a projecting metal cornice (is any of this behind the metal slipcover??).

111-113 W. South (Green Eyed Frog & Standridge Law Firm)—Built ca. 1935. This building housed Jay's Department Store, run by Mr. and Mrs. Koppel, one of the only Jewish families in Benton at that time.

109 W. South (Arkansas Counseling Associates)—Rebuilt in the 1990s on a portion of the lot once occupied by the John L. Hughes & Son Mercantile (built 1908). The Old Hughes Store went from the edge of Jay's Department Store all the way to Main and fronted on Main (encompassed this building and the whole park). H. J. Gingles purchased the Hughes Building in 1935 and opened a grocery store there. It was later Gingles Furniture and Hardware. The old building burned in April 1991.

Bart Owens and Randy Mooney Memorial Park—This was the site of the old Hughes Building (Gingles Furniture and Hardware), which burned in April 1991. The park was erected by the Benton Rotary Club in memory of Bart Owens and Randy Mooney, two young men who were tragically killed in 1993.

Main Street (east side)—

Gingles Building, 1962 (southeast corner of Main & W. South)—location of a ca. 1900 one-story, brick building that housed the W. C. Caldwell Drug Store in the corner storefront and a furniture store next door. It was later occupied by the Benton Wholesale Furniture Company, owned by H. J. Gingles. The original building was destroyed by fire in the 1950s and was rebuilt in 1962.

101 N. Main (Colonial Cleaners & Teddy Wilson Tax Service)—Site of the 2-story, brick LaGrande Hotel and Café, which was the oldest brick commercial building in downtown Benton before it was destroyed by fire about 1956. Now the oldest building is the 1883 Bush Drug Store. The current structure housed Colonial Cleaners (until it was damaged by fire) and Teddy Wilson Tax Service, which is still there.

111 N. Main (Hughes Building, 1908)—Built by the Hughes family in 1908. This housed Benton Furniture and Undertaking and later, Sparks Department Store. The Benton Furniture and Undertaking Company opened in 1913 with B. B. Sims as manager and J. J. Landers as employee.

125-127 N. Main (Gingles Building, 1956)—An earlier building on this site housed Burton Jewelry and the Lonestar Café (by the 1940s). The building burned in 1955 and was rebuilt by owner Henry Gingles the following year. Burton Jewelry reopened in the new building and continued to operate for several years.

129 N. Main (U.S. Post Office, 1939)—The old Post Office was built in 1939 and was designed by Louis A. Simon, Supervising Architect for the U.S. Treasury Department. The building features intricate iron grillework above the front entrance with an eagle in the center. Before the post office was built, this lot was occupied by the 1908 county jail. **When did the post office move out of this building?**

Main Street (west side)--

126 N. Main (Ellis Law Firm)—built ca. 1910. Housed a general store in 1915. In February 1924, Brown's Market opened in this building. The market carried staple and fancy groceries and fresh fruits and vegetables. Parker Drug Store moved to this location after being at 125 N. Market. This building was later a Rexall Drug Store and Fidelity Abstract Company.

118-120-122 N. Main (small red storefront and white building)—The Phillips Building was constructed in 1908 and had three storefronts (two of which have been substantially altered). 122 (red) was the Enterprise Shoe Shop, operated by I. O. Davis in the 1930s and later by Lonnie Tubb. 120-118 (white) was the Fair Store in the 1920s and later, Edward's Grill and Green's Barber Shop. In the mid-1960s, the Post Office Café occupied one of these storefronts.

112 N. Main (Internal Medicine Associates site)—This was the site of the ca. 1920 Cox Brothers Motor Company building, which was destroyed by fire in April 1991. Cox Motor Company sold Fords. Allied Glass was located in the old Cox Motor Company building in 1991 when it burned.

South side of W. South Street, moving west—

102-104 W. South (Bell Building, 1888; now barber shop)—Built in 1888 by Dr. J. K. Bell, a physician, druggist, and merchant. This building housed Bell’s Hardware, Dry Goods, and Grocery Store. By the early 1940s, this was H. J. Gingles Tires and Sundries Budget Department Store. In the mid-to-late 1940s, the Victory Theater was located in this building. The building’s façade has been altered (missing windows on second floor and new window shapes on first floor), and it has been stuccoed.

Mural—The new mural depicting important scenes from Benton’s history was completed last year (2014). The mural was a project of the Gann Museum, which raised \$38,000 to pay for it. Artist Dianne Roberts researched and drew the images, and the mural was painted by Mark Davey. It shows the Saline River, Native Americans, DeSoto, arrival of early white settlers, timber and cotton industries, the arrival of the railroad, and Charles Dean “Bullet” Hyten with his famous Niloak pottery made with local kaolin clay.

146 W. South (Regions Bank)—Historically, this portion of the block consisted of a ca. 1935 Sinclair Filling Station, three 2-story buildings dating from the 1890s, and the 1909 Neoclassical-style First National Bank of Benton. In 1922 the First National Bank of Benton became Benton Bank & Trust. In 1934, this became Benton State Bank. Although First Commercial bought the bank in 1989, it kept the Benton State Bank name until 1998 (from 1934 to 1998), when the bank was acquired by Regions. The current bank building was constructed in 1972.

[In addition to the filling station and bank, numerous businesses operated out of the buildings in this block, including Baker’s Barber Shop, Avaritt’s Cash Grocery, City Bakery, a telephone exchange, Walter Caldwell’s Dry Goods, and by the 1950s, Sparks Department Store.]

East side of Market Street, going south—

Regions Bank's Market Street elevation—there were numerous businesses here as well, including Arthur B. Holiman's Dry Cleaning, Holiman's Insurance, and Newbill's Furniture.

Parking lot to north of Habitat for Humanity Re-Store—Site of Newbill's Oldsmobile Dealership.

122-124 S. Market (Leo Herzfeld Building, 1947; now Re-Store)—Built in 1947 by Leo Herzfeld. Mr. Herzfeld's insurance office was located in the small northern storefront at 122 Market. The majority of the building housed various stores. It opened in 1947 as a Kroger Supermarket. It was later a Sears Mail Order Store, followed by McClendon's Furniture and Hardware. Regions Bank bought the building and donated it to Habitat for Humanity.

White Furniture Company—built by Clemmy White in 1972 to house White Furniture Company. The building has a 1976 addition on the south side.

Gann Office Building, 218 S. Market; now Gann Museum (NR-listed 10/21/1975)—Elton Fitzhugh at museum

The Gann Building was constructed in 1893 to be a medical office for Dr. Dewell Gann, Sr., by a group of patients who couldn't afford to pay for the doctor's services. The exterior walls are made of hand-cut bauxite blocks from a farm south of town. This is the only known bauxite building in existence. The building features Queen Anne-style details like decorative spindlework and fish-scale and diamond-shaped shingles in the gable ends. The building was originally just three rooms. The front two rooms (with separate entrances) were men's and women's waiting rooms. Dr. Gann could call patients from either waiting room to his back examining room. This prevented women from having to interact with any rough workmen (railroad or industrial employees) who might be seeing the doctor.

Dewell Gann, Jr., became a surgeon and assumed management of the practice after his father. In 1946 Dewell, Jr., gave the building to the City of Benton for use as a library. An addition was constructed to the rear of the original building to

house a reading room. This served as the Gann Memorial Library from 1946 to 1967 and later became the Gann Museum, which contains exhibits about the Gann family and Saline County history and a collection of Niloak pottery. [Charles Dean Hyten, who was famous for the distinctive Mission swirl pottery, lived in a house directly behind the Gann Museum. It is listed in the National Register but is a private residence.]

Gann House, 224 S. Market (NR-listed 1/2/1976)—

Built in 1895 by Dr. Dewell Gann, Sr., and his wife, Martha, the Gann House was designed in the Queen Anne style of architecture with an asymmetrical façade, corner turret, and wrap-around porch. The front gable features the letter “G” for Gann. This is currently the home of Doyle and Barbara Webb.

Point out Gann Row Historic District to south. Bound by Market, Main, Maple, and Pine streets. It was NR-listed 2/5/1999. Contains 13 Folk Victorian and Craftsman houses built between 1880 and the 1920s. Dr. Dewell Gann, Sr., eventually owned the entire block and used the houses as rental property for working class residents of Benton.

West side of Market Street, going north—

First Baptist Church—Benton’s First Baptist Church traces its history back to April 2, 1836, when the congregation was organized as Spring Creek Baptist Church. The Spring Creek Church was located just outside of Benton on the Military Road and moved to town in 1859. The church has been located near the corner of Market and River streets since 1876. In 1878 the Spring Creek Church became First Baptist Church.

Multiple structures have been constructed near this site for the church. Of course, the church did not always take up the whole block. In 1881 a frame church was constructed on River Street near its intersection with Market Street. The church faced north toward River Street. This building was remodeled in 1918 and stucco added. In 1924 a two-story, brick church with full basement was built at the

southwest corner of Market and Ashley streets, facing east toward Market. At that time, the older church building on River Street was used as Sunday School classrooms. In 1957-58 a new sanctuary was built south of the 1920s building. The 1924 church then became the Sunday School. In 1983 the sanctuary from the 1950s was remodeled. The 1920s sanctuary was demolished in 1986 to make way for a new Education and Administration Building, which was dedicated in 1987. A new auditorium was built in 2004.

147 S. Market (Yingling Appraisals)—W. E. Merrill's Photography Studio was located on this site in the early 20th century.

113-117-119 S. Market (Dr. T. E. Buffington Building, 1946-47)—This unique building was constructed in 1946-1947 by Benton physician Dr. T. E. Buffington. The first floor spaces were used for retail, and offices were upstairs (medical office of Dr. Buffington and dental office of Dr. Bell). Note the private balconies on the River Street side. The 113 storefront housed The Toggery Men's Store from 1950 to 1998, run by James E. "Jaybird" Nutt.

Royal Theatre, 111 S. Market (NR-listed 9/27/2003)—The oldest part of this building was constructed in 1920 by Mrs. Alice Wooten as the IMP Theatre (Independent Motion Pictures). In 1922 Wallace Kauffman, who had previously worked for Mrs. Wooten, assumed management of the IMP. Kauffman closed the theatre in February 1949 for remodeling, which included the construction of a rear addition, a completely redesigned front façade, and installation of new equipment. Interestingly, Little Rock architects Frank Ginocchio and Edwin Cromwell designed the new façade for the Royal Theatre. At the same time, they were also working on Little Rock's Center Theater, which replaced the capital city's Royal Theater. The marquee and Royal sign on this theater came from the dismantled Royal Theater in Little Rock. Benton's new Royal Theatre opened on May 12, 1949. The Royal Theatre was managed by successive generations of the Kauffman family until 1996, when Randy Kauffman sold it to Jerry Van Dyke. In 2000 Van Dyke turned the theater over to the nonprofit Central Arkansas

Community Players, now known as the Royal Players. Since then, the Royal has been operated as a community theater.

101-107 S. Market (Walton Building, 1902)—The Walton Building was constructed in 1902 by Benton physician Dr. James Wyatt Walton. The building's walls are made of ornamental concrete block with a rock face. This building material was very popular at the turn of the 20th century; it was touted as long-lasting and fireproof. The first floor storefronts have housed many businesses over the years, including the City Café, Smith-Caldwell Drug Store, Blue Bell Café, Walton's Gift Shop, and Jerry Van Dyke's soda fountain and restaurant. Professional offices, including the medical office of Dr. Walton, were located upstairs. From 1932 to 1936 Benton's first library was located in the second story of the Walton Building.

West on W. South Street—

212 W. South (Fred Walton, 1950)—location of Fred Walton's car dealership in the 1950s and '60s. **What kind of cars did he sell?**

220 W. South (Christian Community Care Clinic)—Built ca. 1920. This building housed the Benton Fire Department (left) and Benton City Hall (right).

Palace Theatre, 224 W. South (Arkansas Register-listed 8/6/2014)—The Palace Theatre was built in 1919 and is listed in the Arkansas Register of Historic Places for its importance to the entertainment and recreational history of Benton. Changes to the building's façade prevent it from being listed in the National Register. However, it would make a great tax credit project!

The Palace Theatre was built in 1919-1920 by local businessman C. H. "Charley" Womack. The theatre opened to a sold-out crowd on Friday, March 5, 1920. However, within just a few months, Womack sold the building to the Hefley-Skinner Amusement Company of Oklahoma City. By December 1920, the Hefley-Skinner Company was in financial trouble and leased the building to Alice Wooten, owner of the IMP Theatre. The Palace Theatre closed in 1921 and then

changed hands several times, operating as a movie and play theater. In the 1930s and early '40s, the old theater was used as a municipal auditorium. After World War II, the building became a youth recreational center called the Play Palace, where teenagers could play basketball, volleyball, ping pong, pool, or dance on the old theater stage. The youth center closed in 1953 and the building was again used as a municipal auditorium. In 1960 it became another youth center called The Panther Den, named for Benton High School's mascot. In 1964 the City remodeled the theatre by bricking in the windows, constructing an arch at the entrance, and installing a corrugated metal slipcover. The Saline County Library was located in this building from 1967 to 2003. The metal slipcover was removed in 2005, revealing the theater's historic façade.

Parking lot across W. South Street from Palace Theatre—site of the ca. 1910 First Presbyterian Church (later Calvary Baptist Church) and another building which housed the Blakely Hospital.

205 W. South (Moderne Salon)—In the early 20th century, the brown and gray portion of this building housed Ashby Undertaking. In 1931 Nora Rowlan and Sarah French opened the Modern Beauty Shop here.

Back to west side of Market Street, going north—

102 Market (2-story Ashby Building)—This building was constructed ca. 1890 by J. W. Ashby and originally featured a more elaborate parapet with a central raised section. In the early 20th century, this building housed a variety of things, including a gentlemen's clothing store, bank, drug store, and jewelry store. Ashby Funeral Home was in the back part of the building. In 1915 a lodge hall was located upstairs. In the 1920s, Dr. Warren Kelley had his office upstairs, followed in 1936 by Dr. John W. Ashby. From about 1940 until the early 1960s, the Sterling Store 5 & 10 was in this building. The Sterling Store eventually encompassed both Ashby buildings, much like Dollar General does today. The storefront of this building has obviously been altered, and the second story windows boarded.

106-108 Market (Ashby Building, 1908)—Constructed in 1908 by J. W. Ashby. This was Benton Supply Company, run by Joe Gerard. Benton Supply Co. sold hardware, furniture, dry goods, and shoes. By the late 1950s or early '60s, the Sterling Store expanded into this building as well as the two-story building to the south.

110 Market (Shear Impressions Salon)—Built ca. 1910. Like the Ashby Buildings, this one features some nice brick detailing at the cornice. This building housed Sherman Shoe Store and later, Harris Shoe Store.

114 Market (Pawn & Loan)—Historically, 114-116 Market (this and Paradise Pets) was one huge building with two massive storefronts. The old building burned in 1953 and was rebuilt. The 114 storefront housed Farmer's Hardware Store.

116 Market (Paradise Pets)—Rebuilt after fire in 1953. This was Western Auto, run by David and Sybil Carter. The current owners used the old Western Auto sign frame for their pet store sign.

120 Market (Sifted Flour Bakery)—This building was constructed in 1914 to house the L. B. White Printing Company, which printed the *Benton Courier*. This building and the storefront to the north at 122 Market (Condition 1, LLC) were originally faced with ornamental concrete block. By the mid-1970s, this building had a large, shingle mansard and housed the Frontier Restaurant.

122 Market (Condition 1, LLC)—Built in 1914 and faced with ornamental concrete block. This building housed the post office in the 1910s and 1920s. By 1930, the post office had moved to the first floor of the 1924 Martin Building on E. Sevier Street, and then in 1939 moved to the newly completed post office at the southeast corner of Main and Sevier (currently the Salvation Army). After the post office moved out of 122 Market, this building was home to Mr. Black's barber shop with overflow from the *Benton Courier* office in the back portion, then Paul's Shoe Store, Dean's Junior Shop (young ladies' ready-to-wear), a travel agency, and others.

124 Market (vacant)—This building was constructed about 1925 and was also made out of concrete block. In the 1960s, it housed a Singer Sewing store. Later, it became part of Paul's Shoe Store. After that, The Fashion (ladies' ready-to-wear) moved from the Stinson Building (125 Market; across the street) to this building. It has since been a boutique, Judge Herzfeld's office, and a tax office.

128 Market (Rhea's Men's Store & Formal Wear)—Constructed ca. 1915 and housed a variety store and feed mill in the early 20th century. By the 1940s, it was the Domino Café, followed by Mitchell's Grocery Store. In 1956 Rhea Dodson bought the building and opened Rhea's Men's Store (been open since 1957).

First United Methodist Church—The congregation of the Benton Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was organized in 1836, and the church has been located west of the courthouse since 1891. During that year, a frame church was constructed at the northwest corner of Market and Sevier streets, facing Market. It was remodeled in 1918 and given a Craftsman-style porch. A Sunday School classroom building was built behind the 1918 church sometime in the 1930s or early 1940s. The present sanctuary was dedicated on November 24, 1957, and an education building was completed in 1963 on the site of the old sanctuary. Other buildings have been added since that time.

Refreshments at History & Heritage Society.