



# Winnebago Community Historical Society

## Benton Street Through the Years

The Town of Winnebago was officially platted in 1854. Benton Street is named in the original plat, but we do not know the source of the street name. The railroad station, located on Benton Street between Main and Bluff Streets, was the focus around which a thriving community grew. A frame schoolhouse building was built at the southeast corner of Benton and Soper Streets in 1858 and was used until 1868. A hotel, the Winnebago House, was built in 1859 at the southeast corner of Benton and Main Streets, facing the railroad station. DC Lewis later added a public meeting hall. Lewis House, as it later was known, was razed in 1893. Harry DeGrote's Grain and Feed was at the northeast corner of Benton and Soper Streets. The first post office, Winnebago Depot, was in DeGrote's storefront. The street was unpaved, with wooden sidewalks. Two fires in 1891 destroyed most of the buildings south of Main Street: LL Burdick Grocery, UG Dennison Drug Store and home, and Pliny Newton Furniture Store on the west side of the street; Faulkner Brothers Meat Market, the Reflector newspaper office, Newton's Furniture and undertaking business, RJ Runyard harness shop, JL McLain agricultural business, and Faulkner Brothers Livery Shop on the east side. Another fire in 1899 destroyed buildings on the east side of the street.

In 1878, the Village of Winnebago was incorporated. A stock tank and windmill were installed behind DeGrote's on Soper Street. In 1880, two brick buildings were built for William Patton on the west side of Benton Street. In 1881, there were reports of extensive cellar flooding on the street.

Electric streetlamps were installed in 1916, using current provided by the Rockford Interurban Company power plant. Street numbers were introduced in the 1950s. In 1964, new vapor streetlamps were installed. In 2001, the Village passed a resolution earmarking \$160,000 in MFT funds for the improvement of the downtown business district. New sidewalks and gutters were installed, as well as the streetlamps that currently line the street. The street, which had been one way going south, was opened to two-way traffic. Today, Benton Street is being refreshed and returned to one way going south.

### South Benton Street—from Main Street to Soper Street

#### West Side of Benton Street

##### 101 S. Benton

Building constructed in 1946 by the Shaw family  
Currently Anna's Pizza & Pasta (since 2000)  
Village Café also known as Artie & Deb's Country Café (Artyst Alberts & Deb White, 1998-2000)  
Village Café (Helen Hughes, 1988 – 1997)  
Winnebago Coin Wash (1960 -?)  
Shaw's Hop Inn (1946-?)

In an earlier building  
Burkett Dry Goods Store, with apron and sunbonnet factory behind

#### Vacant Half Lot

Drager Barber Shop & Confectionary (burned in 1909)

##### 105 S. Benton Street

Currently Cimino's Pizza  
Olive Branch  
Between Friends  
Cow Pasture Bazaar  
T-Mart  
Nihan & Martin Drug Store (1963-1979)  
Reed's Café (1950s)  
Winnebago Hardware & Appliance (1947-?)  
Kasch's Grocery (1930's-1947)  
Moore's Groceries (1930s)

Building constructed in 1880 for William Patton

##### 107 S. Benton Street

Currently Winnebago Masonic Lodge (since 1919)  
Patton & Morris Hardware Store (1880-?)

**109 S. Benton Street**

Currently Kennedy's on Benton (since 2018)  
Benton Street Diner  
Katherine's Kitchen (2009-2011)  
Village Family Restaurant (2005-2008)  
Benton Street Café (2003-2005)  
Turner's Market (1974-1982)  
Village Market (1971-1974)  
Winnebago Food Mart (1970-1971)  
Kasch's Royal Blue (1930s-1970)  
Confectionary-Allen's Ice Cream(1940s)  
LL Burdick Grocery Store  
UG Dennison Drug Store

Building constructed in 1880 for William Patton

**113 S. Benton Street**

Currently Fashionette Barber Shop  
Fashionette Hair Designers (2000s)  
Muskie's Custom Tiles  
Winnebago Home Improvement Assn.  
Just Pleasure Pools & Hot Tubs  
Rauch Barber Shop  
Freckles Barber Shop (1940s-1974)

**114 S. Benton Street**

Building constructed in 1958  
Currently The Post (since 2019)  
Freedlund Family Chiropractic (2011-?)  
Just Browsing (2006-?)  
Camtech (2003-?)  
US Post Office (1958-1999)

**121 S. Benton Street**

Currently private residence  
Kim Chance Photography (2006?)  
Marie Smith home  
Telephone Office (1920s-1953)

**201 W. Soper Street**

Currently Benassi Family Dentistry  
Freedlund Family Chiropractic (2001-2011)  
Crazy8's Billiards (2000)  
Cleo's Aroma-pothecary (2000-2003)  
Home Town Tanning (1990s)  
Just for You Toning & Tightening (1998-?)  
Lady Bug Gift Shop (1976-1992)  
Bud's Gulf Station (1954-1959)  
Resh's Service Station  
Smith's Service Station

Originally the Rainy-King property with a private residence

**East Side of South Benton Street**

**102 S. Benton Street**

Currently Kevin Doyle's State Farm Insurance  
Cimino's Pizza (2001-?)  
Anna's Pizza & Pasta (1995-2000)  
Winnebago Café (closed in 1989)  
Village Café  
Swanson's Café  
D & D Café  
Florist Shop & Beauty Parlor (1962)  
Taylor's Café (sold 1960)  
M & M Café  
Warehouse TV  
Purchased by Hughes family & converted to confectionary/snack shop

### **102 S. Benton Street, cont'd**

People's Bank (1928-1938)  
State Bank of Winnebago (1912-1928)

### **104 S. Benton Street**

Currently vacant  
Teresa Nagy-T shirts  
Winnebago Video Store  
Wings & Things (2007)  
Sweet 104 (2004)  
JHW Sales-The Oak Store (1990-?)  
Winnebago Public Library (1982-1988)  
Village Café (1962)  
K & K Super Mart (1950s)

### **106 S. Benton Street**

Currently Winnebago Pre-School (since 1989)  
Barber Shop (1950s)  
Cycle Shop (?)

### **110 S. Benton Street**

Current vacant lot  
Martin Shaw's Antique Store (1962)

### **112 S. Benton Street**

Currently Reflections Salon & Spa (since 2009)  
Fashionette Hair Designers (2003-2009)  
American Legion Hall (1958-1965)  
George Hoffman's Shoe Repair (?)

### **114 S. Benton Street**

Currently Bud's Automotive  
Winnebago Counter Tops (? – 1994)  
Bill Hooker's Car Repair (1930s)  
John Morris Livery

### **Downtown Commons**

Currently garden owned by Winnebago Community Historical Society  
Jacobsen's Meat Market (?)

### **116 S. Benton Street**

Winnebago Town Hall (1893-present)

### **126 S Benton Street**

Currently Angel Treasures (since 2016)  
Itsy-Bitsy Quilts (2014 -?)  
Garden Arts (1992-?)  
Village Emporium (1962-1980s)  
Eagle's Nest Antiques & Gift Shop (1962-?)  
Harry DeGrote Grain & Feed (1890s-1962)  
Dennison's Grocery & Drugs (before 1891)  
Post office located in Dennison's & later DeGrote's (1878-1948)

### **Sources:**

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Winnebago Sesquicentennial: 150 Years—Winnebago Illinois 1854-2004. 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary History Committee, 2004.

“The Women Who Bought Main Street.” *Redbook*, vol 124, no 5, March 1965, pp. 61, 116-119.

Rowley, John D. *A Chronology of the History of Winnebago, IL and Area*, unpublished, 1994.

My Community: Downtown Winnebago 2003. Girl Scout Troop 145, 2003.

Articles from various area newspapers collected in the Winnebago Area History Collection.

Photographs collected in the Winnebago Area History Collection.