

A Walk through time

Lawrenceburgh, Indiana
Founded 1802





- 1. Levee
- 2. Town Clock
- 3. Vance House
- 4. Eads House
- 5. Court House
- 6. Woolen Mills
- 7. Train Station
- 8. Hamline Chapel
- 9. Hornburger House
- 10. Hunt Hotel
- 11. Wernke Cigars
- 12. Murder Scene
- 13. Lodge Bldg.
- 14. Ferris Drugs
- 15. 1820 row Houses
- 16. Dunn House
- 17. General's Party
- 18. Spooner House
- 19. Mayor Axby House
- 20. Third Local Bank
- 21. Firehouse
- 22. Beecher Church
- 23. Druid Hall
- 24. Baptist Church
- 25. Walnut St.
- 26. Kohlerman
Undertaker
- 27. Zion Church
- 28. St. Lawrence
- 29. Pfalzgraph Saloon
- 30. 1830 House
- 31. Deutshe Kirche
- 32. Leidertafel Hall
- 33. Buggy Factory



**Welcome to Lawrenceburg, Indiana,
where the interested visitor can enjoy a living
chronology of architecture dating from the early 1800's.**

Founded in 1802 by Samuel C. Vance, Lawrenceburg quickly became a trading center for all of southeastern Indiana, utilizing both its proximity to the Ohio River and the early growth of the railroads to provide the necessary transportation.

Much of the downtown business area is included in a National Historic District. Most of the extensive revitalization and restoration of the buildings and houses in the walking tour area are the result of efforts by the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, the Lawrenceburg Main Street Association and the City of Lawrenceburg.

We offer you a small taste of the architectural feast available to you along our streets.

1. For an overall view of Walnut Street (Lawrenceburg's version of "Main Street"), take a brief stroll to the end of Walnut Street and go up on our levee. When you have the time, enjoy a walk along the levee, which is punctuated with historic signs and explanations. From the levee walk you can see the mighty Ohio and the site where there was once a bustling wharf boat. Because of the vagaries of river depths, a permanent pier for the landing of steamboats was impractical, so Lawrenceburg and other river towns moored barges on the riverfront to act as docks. It was presided over by a city employee known as the "wharfmaster". For more than 100 years, residents came and went by flatboat and paddle wheeler, with their first glimpse of "home" the view down Walnut Street. Here, too, landed hundreds of

German immigrants who gave Lawrenceburg its distinctive atmosphere and love of music.

2. In honor of the brave men and women who have served in the Armed Forces and who continue to protect us today, the Lawrenceburg Bicentennial Committee erected a town clock and bell tower, and a Memorial to the Common Man on the levee. There you will also find an historic marker in remembrance of the day in 1861 when Abraham Lincoln, on his way to his first inauguration, made a brief speech to the crowds gathered around his train.

3. Return to Walnut Street and turn left. Four blocks down the street on your left is Samuel C. Vance's magnificent Federal style mansion, built around 1818. It is currently owned by the Dearborn County Historical Society, which operates a museum and research facility. The house is open to the public on a regular basis. The main hall is graced by a soaring circular staircase which reaches from the first floor to the attic. At one time there was a secret closet under the stairs, reportedly used by Vance to hide his money. The remains of a huge kitchen fireplace are still in the basement. As you approach the house you are actually looking at the back porch. The Vance house, with its ornate palladian windows, faced the river, and in pre-levee days looked out over a lane flanked with trees leading from the river landing. After Vance died in 1830, the house became an early co-educational college run by his daughter and her physician husband, and it was later sold to successful merchant Omer Tousey. When the property was sold by the Touseys in the 1870's, it included a large brick stable, brick house, shrubbery, fruit and shade trees. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



4. Retrace your steps west toward the Court House. The white-sided house on your right is reputed to be the birthplace of James B. Eads, an engineer who designed and built the first bridge across the Mississippi

River, among other accomplishments. It is currently owned by attorney Richard Butler, who is in the process of restoring it. The house originally stood at the east end of New Street, and was first moved to William Street during the construction of one of Lawrenceburg's many levees. It was later moved to this site in order to preserve it.



5. The Dearborn County Court House, also on the National Register, was the most important design of its architect, George H. Kyle, and was completed in 1872. It has been characterized by architectural



historians as “a fine example of a Classical Revival building with a fluted Corinthian columned portico.” Several memorial plaques near the front entrance and a marble Veteran’s Memorial in the yard attest to the patriotism of Dearborn Countians who served in the Armed Forces. Although the interior has been remodeled several times, the work has been done in such a way as to preserve

the building’s best features. Stained glass windows in the Court room were donated in 1939 by members of the Bar to commemorate their fellow attorneys. The Court House is open to the public Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p. m.

6. Directly across the street from the Court House is a large brick building currently used as offices. One of the city’s early industries, the Lawrenceburg Woolen Mills, operated here in 1866. The structure later housed a furniture factory. Note the star-shaped iron “decorations” along the walls. These are actually anchors for long iron rods which help to stabilize the building. You will



see them on many of Lawrenceburg's older structures. Around the turn of the 20th Century young Lawrenceburg residents enjoyed roller skating across its sturdy wooden floors. During several early floods, beleaguered residents took shelter in the upper floors of this building and the Court House.



7. Across Mary Street from the Court House is the newly remodeled Lawrenceburg Library. Attached to the Library facing William Street is the restored Lawrenceburg Railroad Station. It was built in the early 1900's and has been converted into a conference room for the Library.

8. In the next block is Hamline Chapel Methodist Church, erected in 1847 and dedicated to the memory of Bishop Hamline. Much of the necessary funding for construction was provided by a public collection, to which many townspeople contributed regardless of religious affiliation. The church is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.



9. At 13 W. High Street is an Italianate building now owned by the B.P.O. Elks and used as their meeting place. It was built around 1844 as a private home by Jolm Hornberger. The wrought iron fence which surrounds the tiny front yard is typical of those in use during the Victorian period. Adjoining the Hornberger house is a business building erected by Jolm F. Hornberger, son of the original homeowner, to house his successful jewelry business. At one time there was a passage between the two buildings.



10. Located on the northeast corner of High and Walnut Streets is the Jesse Hunt Hotel. The Historical Landmarks Foundation of Indiana completed an extensive stabilization of the building and a recreation of the exterior as it once looked. Jesse Hunt built the oldest portion in 1818. It was the first three story building in Indiana and it excited much interest as townspeople wondered why anyone would want to sleep so far up in the air. Jesse Hunt had wide ranging business interests, including a very early version of the hay baler, which created huge bales, suitable for shipment down the river on

flatboats. Andrew Jackson visited the hotel and received his political allies in the Jesse Hunt hotel, and Benjamin Harrison, who was born just across the Miami River in Ohio, was a frequent visitor. It is now the headquarters of United Community Bank.



11. Directly across High Street from the Jesse Hunt Hotel is a building which once housed an industry which flourished for about 20 years in the mid 1800's. For a number of years, Lawrenceburg was the tobacco and cigar making capital of the mid-West. In 1873 more cigars were made here than in any county west of Cincinnati. That year more than five million hand rolled cigars were shipped from this place, more than two million of which were made in the Wernke factory located in this building.



12. The next building, or the second one from what was once called Gray's Alley, is one of Lawrenceburg's oldest commercial buildings.

In January of 1820 it was the scene of a murder, when Amasa Fuller shot Palmer Warren in a quarrel over the affections of a young woman.

The following August, Fuller became the first and only man to be legally hanged in Dearborn County. A folk ballad written about the tragic affair is still sung by traditional musicians.



13. Next door to the Jesse Hunt Hotel is the former location of Lawrenceburg Lodge No.4, F. & A. Masons, organized in 1814, two years before Indiana became a state. This building was erected in 1893. In its early days, the ground floor was used as a clothing store, variety store, and at one time the United State Post Office.



14. The last building in this block is the former Ferris Drug Store. The original business was founded in 1816 by Ezra T. Ferris, and was continued through three generations of his family. The store moved to this site in the 1830s. After being destroyed by fire in 1852, Ferris had this one erected immediately, with a “grand opening” in March of 1853. In June of 1870 a “rope walker” caused a minor sensation by stretching his rope from one building to another and crossing the intersection at rooftop level.



15. Continue on High street across Short Street. In this block are many outstanding examples of early row houses, some dating back to the 1820s.



16. At the intersection of High and Elm streets, two impressive white brick houses can be seen. Tradition says that the beautiful Greek Revival home on the northeast corner was built by Judge Isaac Dunn in 1840. It stands on a lot originally owned by James W. Hunter, who died in 1836. Judge Dunn married Hunter’s widow, the former Harriett Protzman. It contrasts with the house directly across Elm Street, but facing High, which Judge Dunn built in 1818 and remodeled extensively over the years, although maintaining a simplicity of style. Judge



Dunn served as president of the first bank built specially for that purpose, which stands next door to his early home. The earlier Dunn home, seriously damaged by fire, was restored by Historic Landmarks foundation

17. About half way down the next block of High you will see the large light brown residence built in 1857-58 for Joann Brower Hunt. Here in 1865 a gala party was held in honor



of Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman, his brother Senator John Sherman, General Ambrose Burnside, and other notables of the day. The home at one time was used as a private hospital.

18. Return to Elm Street, where at 188 Elm you will see the outstanding example of Italianate design, built around 1860, and the home of Civil War General Benjamin Spooner.



19. At 129 Elm Street is a fully restored house once occupied by Lawrenceburg Mayor Joseph Axby, who was also a well-known veterinarian. The lot belonged to who built a home on the lot in 1848, possibly as rental property. In 1872 Dr. James D. Gatch, a Civil War surgeon, who was the first doctor of the stricken President Lincoln at Ford's Theater, here. By the late 20th Century the home was in danger of destruction. In 1999 it was purchased by Indiana Historic Landmarks Foundation, and restored the next year. It is presently the offices of Indiana Land Title and the Stroup Law Office.



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20. Go back to High Street and return to Short Street. Turn right. About half way down the block on your left is a building which is now owned by the Carpenters Union. Once again in the popular Italianate style, it was built in 1860, as the third local bank. The ever active Isaac Dunn was its cashier. The Masonic Lodge met on the second floor. This building is one of dozens in Lawrenceburg built by Martin Tittle and his descendants, who were master brick masons.



21. Across the street is the delightfully busy Queen Anne style fire house built in 1882 to house the city's first fire "engine". The stables were located at the rear of the building, and the city offices were upstairs.



22. On your left in the next block is the 1882 Queen Anne Beecher Presbyterian Church. It was named for the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher, who began his preaching career here. The old church over which he presided is pictured on a plaque which adorns the front of the present building. According to local tradition, Beecher was visited here by his sister Harriett Beecher Stowe, and this is where she met Thomas Magruder, supposedly the model for "Uncle Tom" of Uncle Tom's Cabin. Magruder at that time lived in a log home only a few blocks from the church.



23. At the corner of Short and Center Streets is a building constructed in 1869 by Jacob Foshag as a meeting hall for the Order of Druids. A contemporary account describes the way the meeting room was decorated to resemble a real forest. When the building was new, Foshag operated a billiard saloon on the first floor. It was later converted by him into an ice cream parlor and confectionary. At one time the spacious third floor of the building was an auditorium, the home of the St. Cecilia Musicale, one of many such organizations that flourished in Lawrenceburg at the turn of the Twentieth Century as a testimony to the largely German population's love of music. The St. Cecilia disbanded after the 1937 flood destroyed many of the town's pianos.



24. Turn left on Center Street. On your right is a small building which looks vaguely like a church. It was, in fact, Lawrenceburg's original Baptist Church, organized in 1807. From 1830 to 1837 the congregation met in the Presbyterian Church, and then in the Court House, which was at that time unused because the county seat had been moved to a more central location in Wilmington. At one time the building had a bell tower. It has more recently been used as an office supply store, briefly by another congregation, and it is now vacant.



25. Turn right on Walnut Street, noticing its width. Lawrenceburg's early market house was located in the middle of this street, and residents came here to purchase their groceries, meat and dairy products. As neighborhood groceries grew in importance, the market house became less desirable, and it was finally torn down in 1870, the same year in which the local newspaper announced a successful campaign to rename Partition Lane to the more prosaic Center Street. Be sure to look up at the facades of the older buildings. Many of the ones that resemble carved wood or stone are actually made of cast iron. A number of firms, including the Mesker Iron Works in Evansville, manufactured these intricate decorations, selling them by catalog throughout the country. The iron work in Lawrenceburg is mostly late 19th Century and is not structurally necessary to the buildings. In many cases it was added to older and "plainer" buildings to modernize the storefronts.

26. On your right at 316 Walnut Street is a building constructed before 1875 that was owned by L. Kohlerman, an undertaker who also operated a livery stable next door. In this area of Walnut Street it is easy to see the original elevation of the land behind the buildings. Many of the downtown streets have been raised to higher levels to help avoid flood waters. In many cases owners of buildings which once had been at street level found themselves with a new street at second story level.

Many buildings were remodeled to add a new "second" floor, and others were jacked up and a new basement put beneath them. For many years in the 1860s and 1870s the raising of buildings provided work for those who specialized in it. Occasionally something went wrong, as it did in the case of a two story building on Walnut Street that slipped off the "raising mechanism" and crashed to the ground, injuring several people.

Many of the older buildings still have a full story below street level.



27. Zion United Church of Christ was organized in 1846. For many years its congregation also met in the Presbyterian Church. The present building was constructed in 1867 as "Evangelical Zion Church". Brick work was done by Martin Tittle, who placed an estimated 170,000 individual bricks in its walls. For many years the church conducted a German day school. The town clock was placed in the steeple in 1910.



28. At the end of Walnut Street is St. Lawrence Catholic Church, built the same year as Zion. It was organized in 1840 by 15 newly arrived German families, who first met at a house they rented for that purpose from Jesse Hunt. Their first church, located on the other side of Walnut Street, was built in 1842. When the present church was dedicated in 1867, an estimated 2000 people attended, arriving by chartered steamboat and trains. Martin Tittle and Jesse Smith were the brick masons.



29. Returning toward the river, notice a building which proclaims itself as “J. PFALZGRAF SALOON”. Built prior to 1876, it still retains its early charm. A pressed tin ceiling can still be seen inside, although the murals which once covered its walls have long since disappeared.



30. Virtually the entire block after the Pfalzgraf building is noteworthy. Here a 1830s house nestles next to a three story commercial building which proudly announces its construction in 1857, followed by a Second Empire building of the 1880s and a very ornate Italianate building dated 1881.



31. Turn right onto Center St. for half a block to see Duetche M. E. Kirche at 15 W. Center. The German Methodist Episcopal Church was built in 1860 in the Greek Revival Style. The building became a lodge for the Fraternal Order of Eagles for many years before being converted into law offices. Notice the stone tablet in the gable. Return to Walnut Street.

32. Halfway up the next block on your right is the wildly decorated Liedertafel Hall, built in 1893 to house a German music society. Its grand opening concert stretched over three full days, with two performances



daily, involving church choirs, local bands and orchestras, vocal performers and instrumentalists. For years its auditorium and dance floor were renowned for their excellence.

33. The store at 125 Walnut Street was built in 1855 as a carriage and buggy factory by A. A. Heifer, who had a large southern trade.

Although the Civil War almost forced him into bankruptcy, he weathered the storm. Helfer sold the building in the 1860s to Lewis Adler, an enterprising young dry goods salesman. Adler “opened the front” of the building, installing three show windows of the “best French glass”, each pane measuring five feet long and two and a



half feet long. He remodeled the interior, using the first floor as a retail outlet and the second and third as wholesale showrooms. On the first floor were more than 15 velvet cushioned counter stools, and he became the largest customer of the city’s first gas works, installing 53 gaslights in his store. This, a local newspaper marveled, was more than half again as many as were used to light the entire city. Later owners remodeled yet again, making living quarters, complete with fireplace, on the second floor, and adding a pressed tin ceiling which is still in place.

There are dozens of additional architectural delights to be found on our quiet residential streets. A leisurely walk along the tree shaded sidewalks will reveal them to you. With only a little imagination, you can briefly recapture a day when downtown business people lived in spacious apartments above their establishments, and children played along streets which had not yet seen an automobile.



Notes

Notes



Original walking tour of Lawrenceburg Indiana
by
Chris McHenry
for the Lawrenceburg Library
Revised 2007 C.A.W

Funded by



Printed by
General Graphics Inc
Lawrenceburg, Indiana