

Points of interest While In Benton

Charlie Birger memorabilia can be seen at the

Old County Jail Museum

Address: 209 W. Main St.

Exhibits: The mansion and adjoining jail have been restored to their original 1905 condition by the Society for the Historic Preservation of Franklin County. The exhibits include:

- Old radio equipment from station WFRX that was used when the Beatles' George Harrison visited the area in 1963 and the station played the first Beatle record in the U.S., "From Me to You."
- Memorabilia from Prohibition, gangs, and Charlie Birger in the 1920's.
- room dedicated to high school, college, and professional basketball standout Doug Collins, who spent his childhood in the area and lived in the mansion while his father was sheriff. His one-time bedroom has been converted into a room dedicated to his basketball career.
- Civil War Memorabilia and John A. Logan historical items, and local history items.

Notice the 17-foot monument to Gen. Logan and the 209 Union Soldiers from Franklin County who died to preserve the nation. Home of the Franklin County Tourism Bureau

Special Mentions: The jail became a symbol for the gang era in Southern Illinois during Prohibition, and became the last stop for Charlie Birger, the last man publicly hanged in Illinois on April 19, 1928 for the 1926 murder of West City's mayor, Joe Adams. A new jail was built in 1991, and the old jail was placed on the register of Historic Places on Feb. 1, 1999. It is also the home of the Franklin Tourism Bureau.

Franklin County Garage 1910 Museum

Address: 211 N. Main St.

Benton, Illinois

Hours: Mon - Fri: 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Open on Sat from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. from May to October.

Admission: No Charge, donations accepted

Phone: 438-2121

Summery: The garage was built in 1910 as Franklin County's first Ford Dealership. The building, which contains about 90 % of its original equipment, has been restored as an automobile showroom and machine shop of that era. Within walking distance of the Old Franklin County Jail.

Museum Description: Exhibits currently include:

- 5 Ford Model T automobiles, including a car that belonged to Southern Illinois gangster Charlie Birger.

Among other Birger memorabilia are the handcuffs Birger was wearing when he was hanged April 19, 1928 and a bullet-proof vest that Birger often wore.

Beatles Memorabilia is located at the bed and breakfast
Hard Day's Nite B&B and Beatles Museum

Address: 113 McCann St., Benton, IL

Directions:

I-57 exit 71. At the top of the ramp, head east on Hwy 34 / Main St. to the Benton town square. Drive around the square and continue east on Hwy 34. Cross the railroad tracks, pass Frisco St., and look for McCann St. on the left, right before the High School. The B and B is the first house on the left. Park on the left side of the house.

In 1963, George Harrison of Beatles fame came to visit his sister, Louise Harrison Caldwell, who had moved to Benton. The very first Beatles music ever played in America was at a tiny West Frankfort radio station the summer of 1963 -- the song was "From Me to You." George also played in a local band call The Four Vests and a Beatles first performance was at the Eldorado, IL VFW Hall on September 28th.

Hard Days Night B&B has a Beatles Museum located in the room George and brother Peter stayed in. George's sister has moved back to the Benton area, and she meets many fans staying at the B&B. This is now considered the most historic landmark in Franklin County! [Robert Bartel, 11/23/2000]

Points of interest While In West Frankfort, IL

Frankfort Area Historical Museum

Address: 2000 E. St. Louis St.

West Frankfort

Phone: (618) 932-6159

Admission: No Charge

Hours: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Wed and Thur. Open by appointment at other times. Groups of over 10 should call first.

Shows early Franklin County history, including a mural which follows the area's history from 1802 to 1976.

Museum Description: Located in 'old Frankfort', the museum is the renovated 3 story Logan School. The museum offers:

- A genealogy library
- A one-room school
- an arts and tea room
- replica of an early 1900s five-room home
- quilting room
- Auditorium (mural located here)

A gift shop is available to visitors, and on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. lunches are available in the tea room.

Old Chicago and Eastern Illinois Depot

www.westfrankfort.com

102 W. Main St. (1-49 next to the railroad tracks)

937-2205

The museum has veterans' memorabilia from World Wars I and II and the Korean and Vietnam wars. There is also memorabilia from the Civil War and Spanish American War. There is a coal miner's memorial wall east of the museum, and a soldier's memorial in front of the depot.

In Johnston City

Barb's Custom Embroidery - (618) 983-6787

140 W Broadway Blvd

Johnston City, IL 62951

In Eldorado

Eldorado has some nice antique stores downtown.

Beatles' first appearance at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Hall

*In September, 1963, five months before the Beatles' first appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show brought them stardom in the United States, George Harrison performed at the **Veterans of Foreign Wars hall** in Eldorado with a local band. This was the first performance by a Beatle in the United States. At the time Harrison and his brother were visiting their sister, Louise, who had recently relocated with her husband to nearby Benton.*

In Harrisburg

John Dale Cavaness's final house was at 210 W. Walnut St. in Harrisburg, IL

*In December, 1984, a respected local physician, Dr. John Dale Cavaness, was charged with the murder of his son. The case was chronicled in the book by Darcy O'Brien, "Murder in Little Egypt". The case details the murder of Sean Dale Cavaness, J.D. Cavaness' third son. The divorce of Sean's mother and father had him hit hard, and he had turned to booze. Dale took his son Sean out to a private road, and shot him twice in the back of the head. During the trial, the case of Mark, (whom was presumably also murdered by Dale) was not mentioned. After being convicted and sentenced to death row, John Dale Cavaness later hung himself with electrical wire. Some say it was because he was so distraught over the loss of his two sons, and felt guilt for them, or others speculate that he was a control freak, or degenerate gambler with massive debts, and he would choose how he died, and nobody else. Current Senior Citizens of Eldorado remember Dr. Cavaness, and say he was a great man, who made house calls. It is believed that J.D. Cavaness murdered Mark and Sean for insurance money, and because he looked at them as failures on his part. **John Dale Cavaness's final house was at 210 W. Walnut St. in Harrisburg, IL** where he lived with his live-in girlfriend, Martha Culley until his arrest and conviction.*

Old Shawneetown Bank

Old Shawneetown is the site of the first bank chartered in Illinois in 1812. Originally in a log cabin it was replaced in 1822 with a brick structure (only the second one in the town) now known as the John Marshall House.

Local legend states that the Shawneetown Bank refused to buy the first bonds issued by the city of Chicago on the grounds that no city located that far from a navigable river could survive.

Another historic bank building, the *Bank of Illinois*, was constructed in 1839-41 to house the offices of the Bank of Illinois at Shawneetown. It later housed numerous other financial institutions before it was closed in the 1930s. This fine example of Greek Revival architecture survives as the Shawneetown Bank State Historic Site.

**The 2009 Mystery Tour ends at the
Ohio River Bridge in Old Shawneetown, IL.**