

**Historical Marker - L556A - Van Buren County / Van Buren County Courthouse  
(Marker ID#:L556A)**



**Front - Title/Description**

**Van Buren County**

Settlers attracted by lumbering came to this area in the 1830s. By the 1860s a mild climate, rich soil and easy access to the Chicago markets created a thriving fruit industry in Van Buren County. The county was one of thirteen platted by the territorial legislature in 1829, and one of six named for President Andrew Jackson's cabinet members. A gubernatorial commission chose Lawrence as the seat of government; however, when the county was set-off in 1837, the board of supervisors chose Paw Paw. When the board decided to build a new courthouse in 1900, it considered moving the county seat. South Haven, the county's largest town, Lawrence and Hartford all vied for the designation. In a countywide election on April 1, 1901, citizens voted to keep the county seat in Paw Paw.

**Significant Date:**

Statehood Era (1815-1860)

**Registry Year:** 1977    **Erected Date:** 1990

**Marker Location**

**Address:** Paw Paw Street

**City:** Paw Paw

**State:** MI    **ZipCode:**

**County:** Van Buren

**Township:** Paw Paw

**Lat:** 42.21625000 / **Long:** -85.88956800

**Web URL:**

**Back - Title/Description**

**Van Buren County Courthouse**

Van Buren County officials occupied the first county courthouse (the present Paw Paw City Hall) in 1845. On September 2, 1901, Frank O. Gilbert, the grand master of the Michigan Free and Accepted Masons, laid the cornerstone for the present courthouse. Members of the Grand Army of the Republic and fraternal organizations marched through town in celebration. The Paw Paw True Northerner estimated that between 8,000 and 10,000 people attended the ceremony. The monumental Classical Revival building, designed by Jackson architect Claire Allen, was dedicated on February 23, 1903. The Sheldon and Oradell Rupert memorial clock was installed in the tower in 1986. Both of Van Buren's courthouses are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.