

constructed circa 1960

## Ben Franklin · 378 River Street

*In 1957, it was announced that the Manistee store was to be remodeled and expanded and was believed by company officials to be "...the largest Newberry store in the nation based on store frontage on a main street business district."*

*For the next six years it was business as usual for the local store until the early morning hours of Jan. 10, 1966, a fire began and soon spread throughout the building, once again completely destroying the entire structure.*



*Estimates of damage ran as high as \$1.5 million when the block-long building on River Street was leveled by fire. The furniture department of Montgomery Ward's was burned and an entire block of stores and offices across the street had their windows broken by the heat and suffered smoke damage."*

*After the renovations were made after the fire the building at 378 River Street was occupied by the Ben Franklin Store until 1987 when they moved to 390 River Street.*

**Excerpt from Wikipedia - Ben Franklin Stores** - The chain originated in Boston in 1877 as Butler Brothers, a mail-order wholesaler selling general and variety-store items. At the turn of the 20th century, Butler Brothers had over 100,000 customers in the United States. As variety stores were penetrating their market, the company founded the Ben Franklin chain in 1927, which was sold in 1959. At Ben Franklin's peak, the chain had 2,500 stores nationwide.



*The building remained vacant until an extensive reconstruction began in 1990 when it was renovated into the Manistee Inn and Marina which opened in 1991. The Inn has 25 rooms, a banquet space for up to 100 people, and two retail spaces fronting on River Street. A large two level parking deck provides 30 spaces for the inn and 10 spaces for public use. The Marina has 15 slips that can accommodate up to 25 foot boats, electric hook-up, plus and a fish cleaning station*

**Manistee Commercial Historic District – listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places**