Inside & Out
Take a closer look at the Charlevoix Public Library
A lovingly restored piece of history.

An architectural treasure.

An inviting gathering place.

A wellspring of information, knowledge, imagination, and creativity.

Our wonderful library is all of that—and more.

“The livingroom of the community”
An Amazing Transformation

A vintage school is reborn

Our library was originally designed as a grade school and gymnasium by Warren Holmes in 1927, and ably served the Charlevoix community for more than 70 years. With the opening of a new middle school in 2004, this building, and its center-town campus, was abandoned.

But not for long.

Soon, our community—in need of a larger library—looked at the school with fresh eyes. Could this once-busy hub of student activity serve Charlevoix in another way? Might the town preserve a bit of its history, enhance a neighborhood, and create a vibrant new library too?

Happily, the answer was yes.

A feasibility study supported the concept. The Downtown Development Authority acquired the property and pledged ongoing financial help for 20 years. Best of all, people came together, shared their ideas, helped shape a plan, gave generously, and passed a millage to make the library a reality. From start to finish, the project took just three years.

In September 2006, the old school opened its doors—Reborn as Charlevoix’s new public library.
The Mural

Capturing Charlevoix circa 1927

Many visitors ask about the colorful mural above the foyer. Our library board commissioned Michigan artist Charles Thompson to create this signature work depicting life in Charlevoix during the 1920s, when the original building was erected.

Thompson conducted extensive research before designing his piece, using historic photos as a starting point. Look closely for the 1927 iconic images of Charlevoix including:

- A Belvedere Club golfer
- The Greensky Indian Mission
- The yacht Sylvia
- A Coast Guard rescue boat
- The Sunbathers
- An Earl Young stone cottage
- Swing Bridge
Many an exciting basketball game took place in this cavernous room—once the school’s gymnasium and performance center! When designing the library, great care was taken to retain some of the gym’s character and make use of the wonderful space within.

The floor was lowered by more than five feet and sand fill was brought in by a giant conveyor belt through one of the windows. Cozy reading areas were created where the mezzanine used to contain seating for local sports fans. (Some of those same seats can now be found in the hallway leading to the children’s area.) The original barrel ceiling remains—only a bit of dusting and touch-up paint on the girders was needed.

Looking around today’s quiet Pew-Ives room—home to adult collections, fiction, non-fiction, media, and computer stations—it’s hard to believe the sounds of boisterous cheers, careening kids, and bouncing balls once filled the air.
Peruse your favorite periodical where children used to play

This sunny sitting room was the school’s original kindergarten. With its large, lovely windows and charming fireplace, it serves today as a relaxing getaway for catching up on current events and favorite publications.

No one can recall ever seeing a fire in the fireplace. (No doubt safety concerns prevented that, even in the 1920s!) A few people in Charlevoix still remember the tiled fishpond (removed in the sixties) — a popular classroom feature that stood in front of the cozy, pillow-covered window seat.

When restoration was underway, the room’s quaint inglenook was rediscovered. With support from the Friends of the Charlevoix Public Library, specialists were called in to restore the rare Batchelder tiles surrounding the fireplace, and a matching hearth was built.

*The delightful plaster-cast relief above the mantle was restored by local artist Jan Glass. It’s a nice reminder of the little ones who once filled this room, eager to explore and learn.*
The Children’s Corner
Imaginative spaces and unique places

It’s clear that this is no ordinary library! And that is especially true when you take a closer look at our children’s facilities. From inviting reading nooks and a most unusual puppet theater, to the whimsical furnishings and computer stations, the entire area has been designed to nurture creativity and encourage active learning among our youngest library patrons. If you were a child, which would you want to explore first?

The Youth Activity Center
Reminiscent of a lighthouse, this “great room” is the perfect place for kids’ concerts, arts and crafts, storytelling, and special events. Be sure to look up into the oculus. Those large beams you see were part of the school’s theater stage.

The Children’s Corner
This area retains a bit of its old classroom feel. Looking to bring some of Charlevoix’s beautiful summers into the building, designers created fiberglass trees, complete with cozy hollows for reading or make-believe.

The Puppet Theater
At first glance, it seems a boat has come ashore to visit! But this classic woody also serves as a puppet theater, where children can create and act out their own stories.

Ahoy Matey!
Can you find other touches that reflect our nautical theme? Look for the rope knots on bookshelves and woods-and-water inspired furniture.
With the addition of Grandma Geri’s Children’s Garden, our library connects beautifully with its surroundings. Here, children can play, adults can enjoy a shady spot for reading, and the community can come together for concerts during the summer months.

The unusual “pondless” water feature was designed and created by the Charlevoix Evening Garden Club, whose members invited others in the community to donate favorite rocks for its construction.

Our bronze statue, The Sower, by Abbott Pattison, has found a perfect home here in the Children’s Garden. A library icon, it stood for many years at the entry to our former building.

Do you have the time? Use the unusual, interactive sundial just outside the garden gate to check the accuracy of your watch. If you have a few minutes, be sure to take a peek through the big kaleidoscope while you’re here.

If you plan to stay awhile, relax on the gnome bench or play a simple melody on the musical instruments provided for your pleasure.

“The Brother’s Play Lot” was installed in 2016. Physical play helps children engage with other children, form friendships, and develop language skills.

We want children to play, learn and grow!
The Teen Lounge
Hanging out in style

Graphic novels, computers with Internet, books and study guides—what more could a teen want? A really cool setting—we’ve got that too!

Take note of the little things that make this library so special

Ordinary features like drinking fountains and directional signs have been artfully designed. Tiles, trim, woodwork, color, hardware, fixtures, landscape, art—all combine to create a truly wonderful public place.

It’s no wonder this library immediately became the pride of Charlevoix!

Period Batchelder tiles have been preserved and returned to their former place above the drinking fountain. Other old tiles remain on the building’s exterior, adding color and detail to the brick.

The cascading blue tile mural that serves as a backdrop at the checkout desks is called Lake Breeze.
Attention To Detail

It’s the little things that make this library so special

Pay special attention to the plaster-cast ceiling in the Michigan Room. It’s a replica of the one that originally graced the area around the school principal’s office.

Three masterful sculptures help liven the library grounds. The bear and fish were created as part of local Red Cross chapter fundraisers, and then donated to our library.

Other donated art can be seen throughout the facility too.

The hallway outside our community room serves as a gallery for an ever-changing array of original art—from works by area school children, to award-winning quilt exhibits.
Our library serves the community in many ways. Meeting rooms can house up to 150 people, and smaller conference rooms accommodate ten to twelve. Savvy, smart, and up-to-speed, the rooms are equipped with sound and projection systems and Internet access—making them an excellent choice for business conferences and public forums. All are available for reservation.

Are you computer-wise and technically in the know? The Coeling computer lab serves as a learning center, where regular classes and training sessions help people of all ages feel comfortable and confident at the keyboard and online.

If you’re looking for used books, look no further. Ongoing book sales take place in the Beyers’ Friends Room, where the Friends of the Library use proceeds to augment our children’s collection.

We invite you to spend some time while you’re here. Log on a computer, check out a book, listen to a CD, leaf through a magazine, research a topic that matters to you, let your imagination take flight.

Whether you are a visitor to our area or a resident—
The library belongs to all of us.
Our Mission

The Charlevoix Public Library connects the community to resources that educate, enrich and empower
220 W. Clinton Street
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www.charlevoixlibrary.org

Library Services

Books, Movies and Music
eBooks, eAudio and eMusic
Free Internet and Wi-Fi
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Programs and Workshops
Concerts and Cultural Events
Early Literacy Activities
Puppets, Puzzles and Games
eLearning Lab
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Art Exhibits
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Used Book Sale
And More

Check our website calendar for upcoming programs

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