



Cashier's House

What is the Cashier's House?

Strong trade routes on Lake Erie made Erie a town bustling with activity. Though Erie began on the lake front, the business center of town shifted to State Street during the first half of the 19th century. This shift made 4th and State Streets the prime location for the Bank of the United States Erie branch, as well as for the home of the bank's cashier.

The Cashier's House was designed and erected 1837-1839 by Philadelphia architect William Kelley. It was built as the home of the chief executive officer of the new bank located next door (Erie Art Museum Complex). Peter Benson was selected in 1836 as the cashier for the new branch bank. Benson, his wife Elizabeth, and their five sons were the first to occupy the house. Though the bank faltered in 1841, the Benson family remained in the Cashier's House until 1843.

A variety of businesses and individuals have occupied the Cashier's House subsequent to the Benson family. The building has been used as a school for young ladies, boarding house, bank, residence, and printing company. On July 17, 1963, the State of Pennsylvania purchased both the Cashier's House and the old bank building in order to secure the buildings' future. Both buildings underwent extensive repairs and restoration in the 1960s and 1970s. The most recent exterior and interior renovations of the Cashier's House took place from 1999 through 2001. The original beauty and luster of the building is once again visible.

Where is the Cashier's House located?

The Cashier's House is located in the heart of downtown Erie at 417 State Street. The museum is less than five minutes from the Bayfront Highway. If traveling North, follow Interstate 79 to the City of Erie. Follow I-79 to the Bayfront Highway. (I-79 becomes the Bayfront Highway.) Travel the Bayfront Highway to State Street. Turn right onto State Street and continue to the intersection of Fourth and State Streets. The Cashier's House is visible on the left side of the street. Parking is available in the rear of the building. (Parking access roads are located on both Fourth and Fifth Streets.) Metered street parking is also available.

If traveling East or West, follow Interstate 90 to the Bayfront Highway Extension exit. This is also the Penn State Behrend exit. Travel the Bayfront Extension to State Street. From this point on, follow the directions listed above.

For additional directions, please contact the Erie County Historical Society at (814)454-1813.

What can I expect from ECHS programs?

Throughout this program, students are asked to explore architectural features and design elements of the Cashier's House, a three story townhouse, in addition to examining primary sources (i.e. advertisements, receipts, documents, etc.) and "touchable" artifacts. These resources and educational tools are used to present an overview of life in Erie during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Many of our programs are interactive. Students and chaperones are encouraged to participate during group discussions and activities. Questions are always welcomed.

This program satisfies the following state standards: 8.1.3A & D, 8.2.3A-C, 8.3.3B-D, 8.1.6A & D, 8.2.6A-D, 8.3.6B-D, 8.1.9A & D, 8.2.9A-D, 8.3.9B-D, 8.1.12A & D

How do we get the most out of our visit?

Studies show that students learn more from a field trip or activity if provided a basic schedule of events prior to the field trip or activity. Be sure to give your students a general outline of their visit. Provide times for lunch, restroom breaks, departures and returns. Students who are well-aware of the day's schedule are less likely to interrupt the program and concentrate better on the information presented. Visit preparation allows teachers, students, and chaperones to get the most from this educational experience.

In preparing for your field trip, give your students a purpose for the visit. Give your students specifics on what to look for, experience, and learn.

It is important for groups to arrive on time. Upon arrival, ECHS staff will meet your group at the front door of the Erie County History Center. Groups of 25 students or more are often divided into smaller groups to allow for a more enriching, educational experience. Teachers are encouraged to divide larger groups into smaller groups of 15 or less prior to arrival.

Review museum rules and regulations in the classroom. The following is a list of rules to share with students and chaperones.

- 1. Do not touch the collections. Even clean fingers leave fingerprints!**
- 2. Running is not permitted inside the museum.**
- 3. Students are asked to remain with their group at all times.**
- 4. It is important to respect museum staff, teachers, chaperones, and fellow students when they are speaking.**
- 5. Smoking, eating, and drinking are not permitted inside the building.**

How do we go about recording our visit?

Photography is permitted in the exhibit areas for non-commercial, not-for-profit purposes. Teachers and students are welcome to document group visits.

In order to remember the visit, and to use what was learned, we suggest creating a bulletin board or display in the classroom or school hallway. Students may contribute to the display photographs, drawings, written responses, etc. Create your very own exhibit!