



Watson-Curtze Mansion

What is the Watson-Curtze Mansion?

The Watson-Curtze Mansion rests on Millionaires' Row, historic West Sixth Street. It stands as a symbol of the 19th century lifestyle of Erie's elite.

Two families occupied the Mansion before it became a museum. The first was Harrison F. Watson, his wife Carrie Tracy Watson, and their daughter Winifred. The Watson's moved into the house in 1891. Harrison Watson was the president of the H.F. Watson Company, which manufactured building, roofing, and lining papers and materials, as well as steam pipe and boiler packaging and coverings. The Watson family moved into their new home the same year the H.F. Watson Company was incorporated. Its main buildings were located along East 6th Street between French and Holland Streets. Over 400 men were employed at this location.

In 1923, the house was sold to Frederick Felix Curtze. Mr. Curtze was treasurer of the Erie Dime Savings Bank, and president of the Erie Trust Company, Heisler Locomotive Works, Union Iron Works and the Keystone Fish Company. The Curtze family, Frederick Felix, his wife Caroline, and two children, Louise M. and Frederick A., lived in the house until 1941. In 1941, after Mr. Curtze died, his family offered the Mansion to the School District of the City of Erie to be used as a museum. The Museum Department of the Erie Public Library moved into the Mansion, which then became the Erie Public Museum. The School District created the Erie Museum Authority in 1979. At this time, the Mansion became known as the Erie Historical Museum. In 2000, the Erie Historical Museum and the Erie County Historical Society merged to form one organization.

The Mansion has 24 rooms, 17 closets, 5 bathrooms and 12 fireplaces. Most of the rooms are very different in design and style. Upon close inspection many unusual building materials and features can be found. There are mosaics (inlaid patterns made of bits of stone, glass or other material), friezes (hand-painted oil paintings on canvas that are attached to the upper portions of a wall) and stained glass windows.

Heavily applied decorative woodwork appears throughout the house. Hardwood oak floors are found in all of the rooms. Even the decorative hinges, door knobs and drawer pulls indicate the high level of detail incorporated in the building of the Mansion.

Where is the Watson-Curtze Mansion located?

The Watson-Curtze Mansion is located at 356 West Sixth 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 Sixth and State Streets. (NOTE: The East bound and West bound lanes of Sixth Street are divided by Perry Square, a city park.) Turn right (West) onto Sixth Street. Parking is available in the rear of the building and along the street.

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?

This program utilizes architectural design, primary resources and artifacts to explore the lifestyle of Erie's elite in the 1890s. Notable features of the mansion utilized in our educational programs include a third floor ballroom, the first private elevator built in the City of Erie, a solarium, a servant staircase and living quarters, and an array of Victorian style design elements. Activities are adapted for grades K-12 and adult.

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,C & D, 8.2.3A-C, 8.3.3C, 8.1.6A,C & D, 8.1.9A,C & D, 8.2.9A-C, 8.3.9C, 8.1.12A & D, 8.2.12A-C, 8.3.12C

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 will concentrate better on the information being 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 Watson-Curtze Mansion. 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. Students may contribute to a display photographs, drawings, written responses, etc. Create your very own exhibit!