



**DUNELAND
HISTORY
CENTER**



dunelandhistorycenter.org

— Discovering Our Story

A new chapter for the Westchester Township History Museum

— Our Roots

The Westchester Township History Museum was established in 1998 to serve as the community's primary cultural and educational archive.

This mission to protect local heritage has been a shared effort between the Library and the community; notably, in 1999, just one year after the museum's founding, Chesterton's downtown was officially added to the National Register of Historic Places.

In 2024, the Library took a definitive step in this ongoing work by purchasing the historic 1885 Brown Mansion from the Duneland School Corporation, transitioning from a long-term tenant to the permanent steward of this landmark.



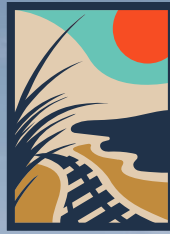
— Our Vision

Our future is built on two foundations: the essential restoration of the 1885 Brown Mansion, and the construction of a new building on the property, recreating the historic barn that once stood beside the mansion.

This work is a necessary rescue mission. By performing structural repairs on the Mansion, we are saving this landmark from environmental decay and ensuring its survival for the next century. These updates will allow the home to be fully staged and opened for public tours for the first time in its history. Simultaneously, the new History Center structure will replicate the property's original 1885 barn and provide modern, climate-controlled, ADA-accessible space to protect our fragile archives from damaging humidity, and to host community programs.



As we embark on this dual mission of preservation and progress, we are moving forward with a new name that reflects this broader, more inclusive mission: *the Duneland History Center.*



DUNELAND
HISTORY
CENTER



— The Brown Mansion

Stepping Into *Our Largest Artifact*

Restoration, Not Renovation

We are performing essential bone-deep restoration by fixing plaster, replacing the roof, and updating HVAC systems to save the building from environmental decay and preserve it as our primary artifact.

Fully Tourable

By moving administrative offices and storage into the new expansion, every room of the Mansion will be staged with antique furniture and opened to the public for the first time as a historic house.

— The Barn

Unlocking the Past *with Modern Access for All*

The new structure replicates the property's original 1885 barn to provide the modern functionality that a Victorian home cannot offer.

Dynamic Exhibits

The Barn will host exhibits highlighting local history from prehistoric times to today, alongside temporary exhibits that change to celebrate unique elements of area history.

Deep-Dive Archives

The new facility will house the Les and Mary Pratt Local History Archives, the Richardson Wildlife Sanctuary collection, and the unique Prairie Club Archives, documenting regional groups active in the Dunes since 1908.

Ancestry & Heritage Discovery

We provide professional assistance for residents researching their family history, including guided use of Ancestry.com Library Edition and access to the specialized Undertaker Records and Index (1885-1942).

History for Everyone

All research tools will be located on the main floor, making our materials fully ADA accessible for the first time.

Junior Historians

A dedicated space will host curriculum-related programs for school and Scout groups, making history interactive and captivating for the next generation.

— Carefully Preserved

Local Expertise *You Can Trust*

To ensure this investment attains the highest standards of historical integrity, we have partnered with experts who specialize in National Register guidelines.

BERGLUND
CONSTRUCTION

We've partnered with a local Chesterton firm that is one of the oldest and most respected restoration companies in the nation. Berglund's portfolio includes icons like Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple and the Shedd Aquarium, bringing technical precision and specialized preservation trades to our community.

 **MOAKE PARK GROUP**
ARCHITECTURE INTERIORS PLANNING

Our architects are leaders in historic preservation, diligently planning the restoration to ensure the Mansion's legacy is protected for another century.

— A Collaborative Effort

By working with the same team behind the Duneland YMCA's Healthy Living Campus development, we are securing *a seamless and thoughtful revitalization of these historic grounds.*



Fast *Facts*

— Self-Funded

This project is entirely self-funded by the Library Improvement Reserve Fund, drawn from years of diligent savings overseen by the WPL Board of Trustees.

— No New Taxes

Because the project uses existing reserves, it requires no new tax levy and will not increase taxes for township residents.

— New Identity

Duneland History Center (formerly Westchester Township History Museum).

— Timeline

The project has a planned groundbreaking slated for June 2026, with substantial completion expected in June 2027.



**DUNELAND
HISTORY
CENTER**

The Duneland History Center collects, researches, and shares stories of the Duneland area, inviting visitors to explore the intersection of people, place, and possibility in Northwest Indiana.

700 W Porter Ave.
Chesterton, IN 46304
219-983-9715

 @westchester.publiclibrary

 /WestchesterPublicLibrary

dunelandhistorycenter.org

opening 2027

The Duneland History Center is a cultural and educational service of Westchester Public Library



**WESTCHESTER
PUBLIC LIBRARY**

For media inquiries, contact:
Heather Chaddock, Executive Director
219-926-7696 | heather@wpl.lib.in.us

Westchester Public Library
200 W. Indiana Ave.
Chesterton, IN 46304
wpl.lib.in.us