



In 1815, the first Library Company was formed in West Chester to collect books that were loaned from shelves placed in local businesses. In 1872, that effort was re-organized into the West Chester Public Library. **With strong community support and land donated by Hannah Darlington, capital was raised for a permanent building to be used exclusively as a library. The outcome was a beautiful structure designed by T. Roney Williamson and constructed in 1888 at 415 North Church Street.** Constructed of West Chester brick and Avondale stone, with stucco-work and copper accents on the tower, its Queen Anne architecture makes it one of West Chester's most impressive public buildings. It contains five windows of Tiffany-style glass, three of them illustrating quotes by Bayard Taylor (1825-1878), a Chester County native and noted poet, literary critic, translator and travel author.

By 2000, it was clear that the library structure would need to expand to meet the needs of the community. It was agreed that a renovation and expansion of the current facility was preferable over relocating the library. The Board of Trustees began an ambitious capital campaign that drew support from public and private sources.

In 2005, the \$2.3 million renovation of the West Chester Public Library, designed by Architects, Frens & Frens was completed, doubling the usable space without disturbing the historic features of this remarkable structure. Recently, August, 2011, the West Chester Public Library was selected for a West Chester Downtown Foundation "Bricks & Mortar Preservation Award" in recognition of the meticulous restoration of the building while successfully addressing the need for more usable space.

Today, the West Chester Public Library receives over 110,000 visits annually and circulates over 150,000 items per year from a collection of 50,000 items. New media, such as internet access and digital and electronic materials have been expanded to meet contemporary needs and presentation events are a regular part of this vibrant library's programs.

*West Chester Public Library, 415 N Church St, West Chester, PA 19830  
610-696-1721; [www.wcpubliclibrary.org](http://www.wcpubliclibrary.org)*