



CHARLEVOIX

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bridging our past with our future

NEWSLETTER

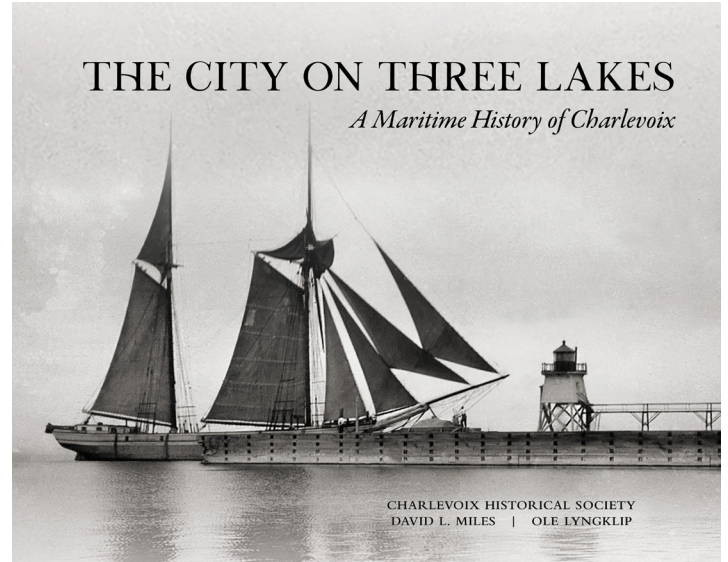
January 2026



The City on Three Lakes

A Maritime History of Charlevoix

We're excited to share an early preview of a project that represents a true milestone for the Charlevoix Historical Society. After years of planning, research, and collaboration, we are preparing to release a publication unlike anything we've done before, and the first at this scale in a generation. This 600-plus-page volume is far more than a book. It's an immersive exploration of Charlevoix's maritime identity and the people, places and events that have defined it. *The City on Three Lakes* builds on the powerful legacy of the Society's first publication, *Bob Miles' Charlevoix*, which became an instant classic in 1976, and continues to shape how we understand the region's history. With this exceptional new work, we're taking a bold step forward — creating a captivating pictorial adventure inside one big, beautifully designed, exceptionally produced, color-rich encyclopedia that is sure to be enjoyed, revisited, and appreciated for years.



A sneak peek at one of the candidate cover designs being proposed for *The City on Three Lakes*. Photo by Mushroom House builder Earl Young in 1905, when he was sixteen years old.

A Visual Record of Remarkable Quality and Depth

Inside *The City on Three Lakes*, you'll find a visual history with a scope and richness we've long envisioned but never before achieved. Including more than 875 images that trace the evolution of Charlevoix's maritime history, the limited hard-cover edition will be produced by one of the finest art book printers in the United States. Many images are drawn from the Society's own treasure trove of over 40,000 historic photographs, meticulously curated and digitized for the first time. Through research and collaboration, our curatorial team has gone on to enrich the visual narrative with material from public and private collections locally, across the country, and beyond, including key selections from the prestigious William L. Clements Library and Bentley Library at the University of Michigan; the Archives of Michigan, Michigan History Center, Lansing; the Little Traverse Historical Society in Petoskey, the Charlevoix County Historic Preservation Society here in Charlevoix; and other major U.S. and Canadian institutions.



Longtime (1934-1959) harbormaster Joe Howard, known by mariners from all over the country, at his dockside office desk topped with a model of the great passenger liner *Milwaukee Clipper*. The huge vessel came into Charlevoix only once, in 1943.

Cover Photo: Workers perch on a cradled vessel under repair at one of the several boatyards once located on the south shore of Round Lake, ca. 1915

The book is being published by Mission Point Press, a Traverse City-based house recognized among the top publishing companies in Michigan and a cultural anchor for the Northern Michigan region. We are excited to be working on this project with a publisher committed to the unique heritage and landscape of the Mitten State and further connecting the story to the regional landscape that inspired it.

A New Layer: Today's Charlevoix

For the first time, we commissioned original photography specifically for a publication. These contemporary images - capturing the color, texture, and character of Charlevoix's landscapes and waterways today - create a compelling dialogue with the historic record. The result is a portrait of a region shaped by its past and alive with its present. At the head of this effort was John Doskoch, President of the Charlevoix Photography Club, who graciously shared his time and many talents, along with several of his drones.

Expert Guidance Throughout

The narrative is led by co-authors David L. Miles, Curator, and Ole Lyngklip III, Society Board Member and Curatorial Adviser, whose combined expertise brings clarity and insight to this expansive visual archive.

The volume is further elevated by the contributions of respected voices in history and conservation, including Eric Hemenway (Anishinaabe/Odawa), a leading local authority on Odawa culture and history. Curators Mary Pedley and Sierra Laddusaw at the William L. Clements Library, a world-class center for American history, joined us to provide a rich chapter on cartography and the early mapping of the Great Lakes - a story never before told with Charlevoix as its center. The Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, a leading northern Michigan nonprofit dedicated to protecting the region's waters, brings local environmental stewardship into focus. A foreword by Charles Eisendrath, former correspondent for TIME magazine, and founding director of Wallace House for journalists at the University of Michigan, shares his deep personal connection to the Charlevoix area in a uniquely poignant contribution.



The outward bound, magnificent North American passes the Weather-vane restaurant, 1950s. Photo by Charlevoix photographer Bob Miles



Two iceboats about to be unleashed on a frozen Lake Charlevoix. Said to be able to reach ninety mph with only a fifteen mph wind behind it, under perfect conditions a well-built iceboat was sometimes capable of reaching Boyne City in ten minutes.

A Book with Lasting Impact

The City on Three Lakes also will be a cornerstone for the work ahead. Proceeds from the sale of the book will directly support the Charlevoix Historical Society's curatorial and educational mission, strengthening our ability to preserve, interpret, and share the region's history for years to come.

More news on the role of this momentous project will play in our future and how our members can support these efforts will follow in the coming months.

If you're excited about what you see here, we encourage you to share the news. Let others know what's coming - a great new book and a defining new moment for the Charlevoix Historical Society.

Belvedere Casino 1923 - 2025

On October 23, 2025, Charlevoix awoke to the shocking news that it had lost one of its most iconic structures due to arson, just after 3 a.m. that morning. The Casino of the Belvedere Club Resort Association had stood for 102 years and was located at the turn of Belvedere Avenue onto Ferry Avenue bordering Lake Charlevoix on the city's east side. Everyone in town and the immediate area knew the Casino as well as thousands of people outside Charlevoix. Many were aware of the Belvedere structure without realizing exactly what it was, how it got there or what the name meant. In this case, "Casino" had nothing to do with the word as it is best known today, denoting a gambling establishment. A diminutive of the Italian "casa" (English "house"), the word was chosen by the Belvedere Club in 1923 for its meaning as a "social center," which the building was in spades for multiple generations of resort members every summer season.

Elements of the structure began life near Boyne City in that town's small, lakeside north suburb of Bay Springs. There, a four-story hostelry was built in 1885 by H. B. Chapman of Reading, MI with the intention of making it a luxury summer resort hotel. Located just outside a town that had yet to see its first train, and with little business arriving by boat, the sparsely tenanted hotel was thought to be a good site for a "state soldier's home," but a new, again unsuccessful hotel owner came along and that never happened. The structure began to be known as "Chapman's Folly" and was taken over by the Valparaiso Normal College for teacher education in the 1894. Next up, it became an apartment house. In 1904, Chapman's Folly became the notorious Beulah Home for (delinquent) Boys, ages six to fifteen, most of them off the streets of Chicago. During its first year, it was reported that ninety-eight boys were in the building. But the venture ended in scandal in 1909.

Back in Charlevoix, the Belvedere Resort had begun in 1878 when Baptists from southern Michigan and northern Indiana purchased land for a summer getaway. Their first five cottages went up immediately. A year later, a members-only clubhouse was added, soon to be a de facto hotel. Expansion brought it to its fullest 84-room capacity in 1906. The Belvedere Hotel quickly became one of the most popular in the region, attracting guests from across the country. However, both the resort members and hotel guests had long needed a place to gather and spread out for various functions.



On the day after the fire, the Belvedere burgee flag flies its colors.

“A Morsel Of Genuine History Is A Thing So Rare As To Be Always Valuable.”

Thomas Jefferson

It took three decades before an idea was born to utilize the land across Ferry Avenue where the coming of the train had left much unused space. In 1922, word was put out to local contractors to develop the site. With the eventual demise of Chapman's structure in Bay Springs after numerous iterations, James Saunders of Charlevoix bought it in 1922 for the lumber and hired his son and some of his friends to take "Chapman's Folly" apart board by board. They transported the former walls and flooring in a Maxwell truck to Charlevoix where, having been awarded the contract, they put much of the wood back together as the uniquely designed Belvedere Casino a year later, structurally strengthened and beautifully refurbished not too many years ago.

From the day it opened its doors, the Belvedere Casino saw non-stop use by the resort, the town, the county, as well as the surrounding region. It was just the right size for weddings, receptions, small conventions, reunions, fun and games, meetings, exhibits et. al., a "social center" in every sense of the word. Several names of note have been believed to have been within its walls: President Truman's Secretary of State Dean Acheson; soon-to-be Senator Barry Goldwater; actor Willam Talman (TV's Perry Mason show); Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson, twice Democratic candidate for the presidency in the 1950s; Tarzan creator Edgar Rice Burroughs; founder of the Oldsmobile auto company Ransom E. Olds; and crooner Bing Crosby.

For the City of Charlevoix, the loss of the Belvedere Casino is immeasurable. It is striking to drive around the bend where Belvedere Avenue meets Ferry Avenue and see that it is gone. The current plan is to rebuild anew, and all await the return of this iconic structure in 2027.



Vintage postcard of Casino with Belvedere Hotel in background



Belvedere Club members trip the light fantastic in the Casino



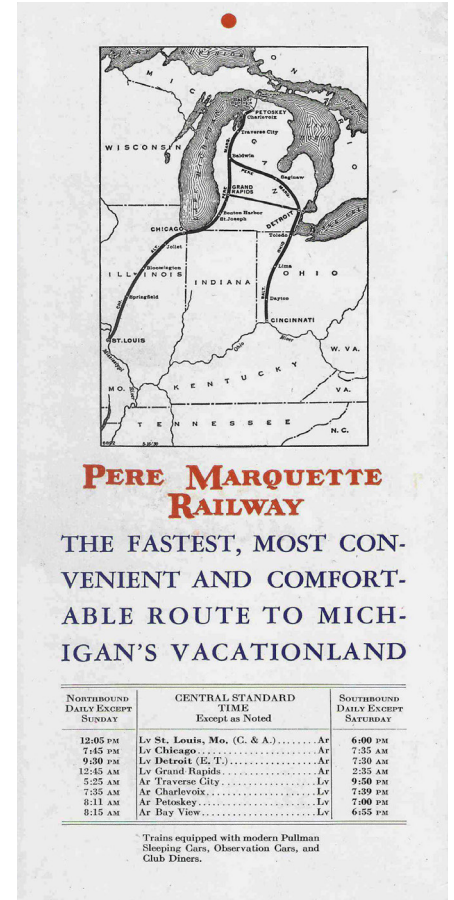
October 23, 2025, after the fire. Photo courtesy of John Doskoch

Museum at Harsha House New to the Collection 2025

Beginning with this digital edition — and with the New Year — we’re introducing a new feature: a round-up of some of the remarkable pieces that joined the Museum over the past year. We received many memorable gifts in 2025, several of which we’ve already explored in earlier editions, including an important 1890s map of the Mt. McSauba sub-division, an armchair belonging to famed poet Sarah Teasdale, and, the most major addition of the year, a nearly complete archive of the *Charlevoix Sentinel* newspaper.

Alongside those major gifts, we are continually energized by the smaller treasures that arrive throughout the year. Sometimes they come from familiar sources, and sometimes from places we never would have imagined, but they always capture our imagination, as we hope they will yours. Each one inspires fresh curatorial excitement and carries the potential to spark new research questions or even solve longstanding mysteries. Even the most ordinary-looking piece of paper can open the door to discovery.

With that introduction, here are a few highlights from the fifty-five items that found a new home at the Museum at Harsha House in 2025.



Pere Marquette Railroad Brochure with route map, 1920s

Pere Marquette Schedule for resort service between Petoskey and Charlevoix, 1919

United States Railroad Administration
EDITION OF 1919

PERE
MARQUETTE

Suburban Resorters'
TRAIN SERVICE
between
Bay View, Petoskey,
Bayshore
and
Charlevoix—Belvedere
Commencing July 3rd, 1919

AVOID WASTE
Keep This Time Table

J. M. RAU, T. A., Bay View
E. E. GROSS, T. A., Charlevoix
W. A. MARTIN, T. A., Petoskey
NEIL DE YOUNG, D. P. A., Grand Rapids
W. E. WOLFENDEN, G. P. A., Detroit, Mich.

Baggage not carried on Motor Trains



The train that ran between Bay View and Charlevoix, called “The Dummy.”

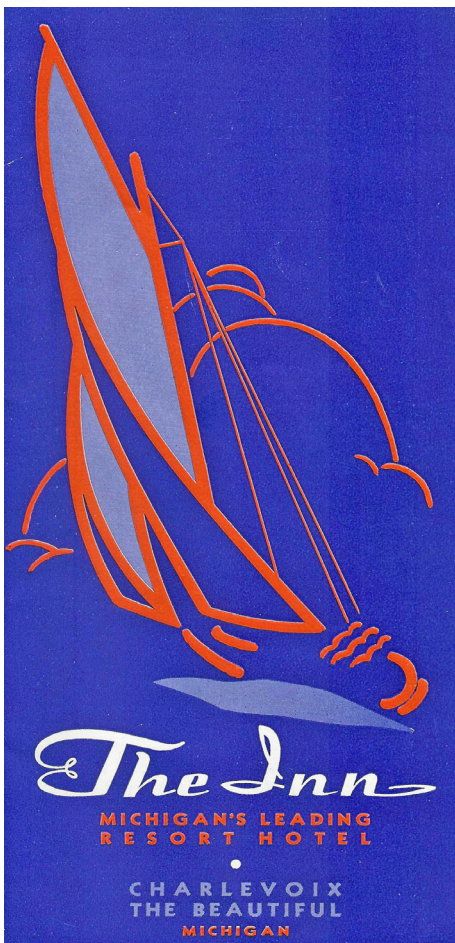
Railroad Ephemera

The Museum has surprisingly little material about Charlevoix's great railroad era and the locomotives that once appeared here daily: trains from the Chicago & West Michigan Railway, which later became the Pere Marquette. In the fall, we excitedly welcomed a substantial collection of just the kind of railroad ephemera we had been waiting for: promotional material, including brochures featuring colorful maps and timetables, some dating back to the first year of rail service in Charlevoix.

In the group we discovered a Pere Marquette Railroad brochure, from around the 1920s, showing the easy availability of service to Charlevoix from St. Louis (through Chicago), and Cincinnati (through Detroit). Also included: a 1919 Pere Marquette schedule, a local train service that linked Petoskey's Bay View resort and Charlevoix's Belvedere Club. It ran six times per day in the high season between the two towns with a stop in Bay Shore, with no baggage allowed. We were impressed by a rare photograph of the "The Dummy," a train that ran between Bay View and Charlevoix. Accompanying it was a colorful brochure for The Inn, a mighty 250-room resort hotel, second only in size in Michigan to the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island. Located at the far east end of Dixon Avenue, it was established by the Chicago & West Michigan Railway Company in 1898 and remained the jewel of the Lake Charlevoix waterfront for forty-three seasons.

Naphtha Launch Souvenir from the 1893 Chicago World's Fair

For a brief period beginning in the later 1880s, a unique type of motorboat plied the waters of Lake Charlevoix, ferrying hotel guests and summer resorters to and fro: the naphtha launch. They rose to popularity when new boiler regulations made steam launches almost impossible for private use. Their distinctive engines — driven by heated naphtha vapor rather than fire and steam — made these elegant little craft affordable, reliable, easy to run, and they soon became an inseparable part of 19th century resort era life. A colorful souvenir, from the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893, celebrates the brief heyday of these unusual craft.



Colorful brochure for The Inn Hotel

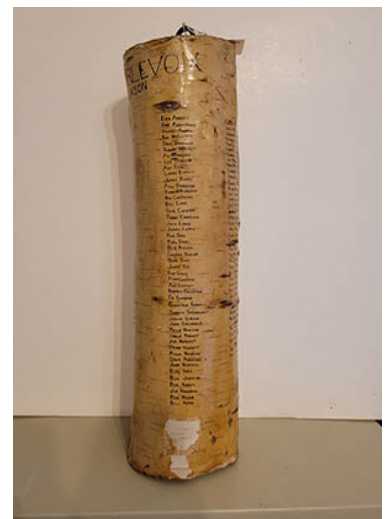


Camp Charlevoix Treasure

Gifts continue to enrich our substantial collection of material related to the prestigious Camp Charlevoix. First established in Ironton in 1927 and relocated to its permanent home at the base of Oyster Bay in 1930, Camp Charlevoix drew in campers from all over the world for forty-four years. New to our collection is a unique commemorative from the summer of 1940, a small birch log inscribed with the names of the season's campers and staff. The log was hung from a beam near the fireplace in Limberlost, the camp's spacious clubhouse.

THANK YOU!

We're grateful to all who contributed this past year, each gift helping reveal new layers of Charlevoix's story for the whole community. Together, generous gifts to the Museum at Harsha House deepen the collection and help the Charlevoix Historical Society grow as a shared place of learning, curiosity, and connection.



Camp Charlevoix Honor Log,
1940

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*Charlevoix Historical Society Members Jean Morrow & Clint Etienne
have passed away. Condolences are extended to all friends and family.*



Willard A. Smith

CHARLEVOIX SENTINEL.

"OUR COUNTRY—NOW ONE AND UNDIVIDED, IS BEAUTIFUL IN ITS GRANDEUR, AND GENEROUSLY HELDS FORTH ITS HAND TO THE PEOPLE OF EVERY CLIME."

Charlevoix, Charlevoix County, Michigan

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