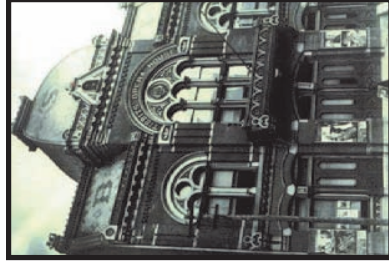


Historic Walking Tour of Downtown Coldwater, Michigan

radios and televisions. The building currently sits empty awaiting a new owner and a new future.

24. 14 South Hanchett (Tibbits Opera House)

Barton S. Tibbits built this opera house in 1882 at a cost of \$25,000. Mortimer L. Smith was the architect. The new opera house had 1,000 seats and 306 gaslights. Performers included John Philip Sousa, Ethel Barrymore, Otis Skinner, James Witcomb Riley, and Fay Templeton. Mr. Tibbits had to sell the opera house in 1885 and Joseph Henning was the buyer paying \$13,000. Henning remodeled the building to include billiards, a ten-pin alley, a saloon and a shooting gallery. In the 1920s it was converted into a "modern" movie theater. Rescued from the wrecking ball in 1959, the Tibbits Opera Foundation restored the opera house. The Art Deco façade was stripped off, and, with limited resources, the front was re-bricked. Presently, a restoration campaign is underway to restore the entire facility, including the façade.



14. 161 West Chicago Street (Starr Home)
This Queen Anne-style home was designed by Asbury W. Buckley and built at a cost of \$9,000 in 1887. The home was a wedding gift to John Starr and his new wife, Belle Woodward. Smith Clizbe (ice merchant) later owned the home, with Ehrie Schmedien being the third owner. The fourth owner of the home was Dr. Howe.

15. West Chicago Street

Many of the houses on the west end of Chicago Street were considered "commoner houses". Though most of these houses are not quite as grand as those on East Chicago or Pearl Streets, the architectural styles are still substantial. Notice the Italianate and Queen Anne styles that still have kept their integrity.

16. South Fremont Street

Notice the different types of architectural styles ranging from Greek Revival to Italianate on this street.

17. 263 West Pearl Street (David C. Allen Home)

This brick Queen Anne was built in 1890. David C. Allen purchased the home in 1910, and his widow, Mida, lived here into the 1970s.

18. 200 West Pearl Street (Chandler Home)

This Queen Anne was built in 1886 for Robert G. Chandler, at a cost of \$6,000 and was designed by Asbury Buckley.

19. 199 West Pearl Street (Skeels Home)

This mansion was built in 1886, for attorney Frank L. Skeels at a cost of \$12,000. The architect was Ebenezer B. Saxton. This elaborate Queen Anne-style home features a cutstone foundation, 12-foot ceilings, seven fireplaces and cherry woodwork. It took 13 months to complete. Skeels used his inheritance from his uncle, Henry C. Lewis, to afford such opulence. Frank Skeels died in 1891, at the age of 45, and his widow sold the home to William A. Coombs, owner of three flour mills. The carriage house was sold and modified into an apartment house.

20. 166 West Pearl Street (Champion Home)

John R. Champion, a lawyer, built this brick Italianate in 1867. By 1871, he traded residences with George Starr. In 1879, Mr. Starr added the Italianate Carriage Barn. In 1904, Horace Woodward purchased the home. The Olsen family currently owns it.

21. 100 West Chicago Street (Century Bank and Trust)

Chartered on September 20, 1890, the original name of this bank was Branch County Savings Bank. In 1935, the Coldwater National Bank merged with the larger Branch County Savings Bank and with the merger moved to 28 West Chicago Street (currently Coldwater Executive Suites). In 1977 Branch County Bank moved to its brand new building at 100 West Chicago Street and, in 1989, they elected to change the name to Century Bank and Trust.

22. West Chicago Street (The Armory)

The "new" Armory was built in 1917 at a cost of \$45,000. It now houses various offices.

23. West Chicago Street (Kerr Building)

Established in 1889 by the two Kerr brothers, John and Andrew, this building was built in 1891. A popular "corner" hardware store for generations, this business had it all, including appliances, paint, glass, toys, sporting goods,

25. 60 West Chicago Street (Taylor's Stationers)

S. P. Noyes built this structure in 1866. The building on the right was built in 1887. Both of these buildings received major face-lifts. In 1923, J.C. Penney opened in Coldwater with a 19-foot-wide store. In 1929, they expanded into the next store. In 1936 the basement was remodeled. In 1963, the company moved to a newer building further east in the downtown (currently housing Zeta One Solutions).

26. 34 West Chicago Street (North Woods Coffee Company)

The J.B. Branch & Company was founded in 1877. Judson B. Branch opened this fine department store at 34-36 West Chicago Street and featured three full floors of retail space, plus a bargain basement. The first passenger elevator in Coldwater (affectionately called "Old Otis") made it more convenient for customers. The store featured carpets, rugs, linoleum, home furnishings, cloaks, suits, lace curtains, draperies, millinery and "fancy goods". J.B. Branch & Company closed its doors in 1986 and is now home to North Woods Coffee Company, serving coffee, light fare and a wide selection of gifts.

27. 19 North Monroe Street (Silver Shear's)

This was the home of the second post office and was built in 1882. The postmaster of that time was D.B. Dennis. This beautiful brick building survives today as Silver Shear's.

Experience some of the captivating history of Coldwater, Michigan through a one, three, or five mile walking adventure!

The History

The city of Coldwater derives its name from the Potawatomi word "chuck-sey-ya-bish" meaning "cold water". The first settlers came to this area from upstate New York and New England by way of the Erie Canal. Pioneers traveling the Sauk Trail (now U.S. 12) found this area inhabited by "fierce and war-like" Indians, and many settlers kept moving on.

Potawatomi leader Chief Topinabee sold what is now Branch County to the United States government in 1821. Joseph Godfrey established the first trading post in 1822 near downtown Coldwater. In 1829, Branch County was laid out and named after John Branch of North Carolina, who was President Jackson's Secretary of the Navy.

Hugh Campbell built the first log cabin in 1830 located on East Chicago Street at the present day site of the Masonic Temple. Allen Tibbits and Joseph Henchett arrived from upstate New York in 1831 and platted out a new village, calling it "Lyons." The settlement changed its name to Coldwater within two years.

A small settlement called Masonville, located on the east banks of the Coldwater River was named the first county seat. However, shortly after that, the Village of Branch, located south of the present-day airport, became the county seat from 1831 to 1842. Once Coldwater was named county seat in 1842, both of these settlements ceased to exist.

Coldwater became incorporated as a village in 1837, after reaching a population of 140, the same year Michigan became a state. By 1840, the Potawatomi Indians were "removed" farther west, although some Indians remained and continued to live off the land.

Telegraph lines reached Coldwater in 1849, and the railroad came to town in 1850. Coldwater had 370 houses in 1851, but lost eight downtown stores that year because of fires. In 1854, the first zoning laws prohibited the construction of any frame (wood) building from Clay Street to the downtown parks along West Chicago Street. This is the reason the downtown buildings are constructed completely of brick. Coldwater was incorporated as a city in 1861.

In the 1890s, the public utilities started operations with electrical service and a water system. In 1905, the present city charter was adopted into law. Interstate 69 cut through the middle of Branch County in 1967, forever changing East Chicago Street.



Coldwater, Michigan, looking West, Coldwater, Michigan

One Mile Tour (Follow Numbers 1-11)

Two Mile Tour (Follow Numbers 1-27)

Five Mile Tour (Follow Numbers 1-42)

1. One Grand Street (Henry L. Brown Municipal Building)

The City and Board of Public Utilities offices are housed in this 30,000 sq. ft. building, built in 2002, featuring limestone exterior and rotunda area with geo-thermal heating and cooling. The building was made possible through a very generous contribution from Robert & Lynne Browne, and was named after Dr. Browne's grandfather. Note the public art (fountain and eagle) in front of building on Grand Street.

2. 28 West Chicago Street (Coldwater Executive Suites)

(Century Bank and Trust) Chartered on September 20, 1890, the original name of this bank was Branch County Savings Bank. In 1935, the Coldwater National Bank merged with the larger Branch County Savings Bank, and with the merger moved to this location. The building was the old E.R. Clark Building, and had a new facade of sandstone and columns added. In 1977, Branch County Bank moved to its brand new building at 100 West Chicago Street, and in 1989 changed the name to Century Bank and Trust. This building became home to the City offices until 2002. The building is now home to the Coldwater Executive Suites, housing several businesses.

3. 36 West Pearl Street (Kilgore International)

Completed in 1910 at a cost of \$52,000, this third post office served the Coldwater community for 60 years. The building survives today as Kilgore International, an educational supplier of skeletal and dental models.

4. 90 Division Street (Victorian Mansion Inn)

This Italianate home was built in 1870 by Alvin T. Lamphere, who traded it in 1875 for the home of J. Franklin Pratt. The Pratt family owned this magnificent home until it was sold to Alfred Morency in 1926. Triple brick construction resulted in 1 1/4 inch thick walls with identical floor plans for each level.

5. 89 Division Street (Osarnus B. Clark home)

This house was built in 1854, in the Gothic tradition of stucco and wood ornamentation. Clark was a state level Whig Party leader, a participant in the founding of the Republican Party, and served as vice president of the liberal 1868 Republican Party Convention in Cincinnati that nominated Horace Greeley for President.

6. 15 East Washington Street (Roosevelt School)

Built in 1923 at a cost of \$140,000, this prior high school survives today as an office complex. It was originally built to accommodate 225 students and in 1950 was crowded with over 500 students. By 1955, a new high school was built at the end of North Fremont Street. Over 700 students enrolled at the new high school in September of 1956.

7. 43 South Hudson Street (First Church of Christ)

Built in 1920, this church survives today and is located on the southeast corner of East Pearl and South Hudson Street.

8. 47 Division Street (Elks Temple)

This three-story Roman Revival design brick structure was built in 1864 as a Spirituallist Church called "Hope Chapel," at a cost of \$22,000. By 1866, it was purchased by Dr. A.D. Angle to become a hospital during the Spanish-American War. Later it housed a museum collection. In the late 1800s it was the residence of the Horace N. Buggy family. Purchased by the Elks Club in 1907 for a price of \$7,000, there have been many renovations, including the removal of four of the five original fireplaces. The twin towers were trimmed down in 1953, probably to "modernize" the facade. Many of the windows have been covered and the entire exterior has been covered with stucco. The interior still remains grand with massive woodwork and interesting architectural character. The Elks Club recently remodeled and partially restored this historic building.

9. 31 Division Street (Branch County Courthouse)

According to some, an arsonist set the courthouse (c. 1887) ablaze on the night of December 5, 1972. The building was a total loss; it was replaced in 1976. After the fire, clock parts were auctioned for \$35 and the 3500 pound bell (made by the same makers of the Liberty Bell) was stored. The bell toll and sight of the clock was missed causing a committee to be formed and a new clock tower built in 1988, 100 years after the installation of the original clock.

10. 10 East Chicago Street (Branch District Library)

E.R. Clarke donated funds for a building to replace the town's modest library. Designed by local architect M.H. Parker and costing \$10,000, it opened in 1886 with Governor-elect Cyrus E. Luce among the distinguished guests at the ceremony. The librarian, Mary A. Eddy, achieved prominence in her field and helped found the Michigan Library Association in 1891. In 1977, the library received an extensive remodeling with a large addition to the south of the building at a cost of \$774,700.

11. 52 Marshall Street (First Presbyterian Church)

This Romanesque Revival style building was started in 1866 and completed in 1869 for a total cost of \$40,104. Note the stone hood moldings and corbeled tables of brickwork. The steeple is the highest in Southern Michigan, measuring 158 feet. It was recently remodeled with lighting added to the steeple.

12. North on Hanchett Street

This street is composed with a range of architectural styles including Colonial Revival, English Tudor Revival and Queen Anne. As you tour, notice the interpretations of each architect in their building.

13. 79 Harrison Street (Saint Charles Elementary School)

Built in 1911, this school offered an alternative to the public school system. A fire in the late 1960s put a halt to the parochial school for many years. With an extensive renovation, kindergarten through fifth grade are offered again today.

28. West Pierce Street

The residents on West Pierce Street pride themselves on keeping the integrity of their old homes alive. Most of these homes have all of the original woodwork and hardwood floors.

29. 163 Marshall Street (Philo Crippen House)

This Greek Revival home was built in 1846 by Philo Crippen and purchased in 1857 by a lawyer, Henry C. Gilbert. Gilbert was appointed Indian Agent for the State of Michigan by President Pierce in 1853. Indian artifact and other memorabilia collected by Gilbert during this period are on display at Mackinaw Island's Indian Museum. The house was owned by five generations of the family spanning 199 years. The main block of the house is framed in 9" by 9" pegged hand hewn beams, and the roof rafters are bark covered tamarack posts.

30. 162 & 176 Marshall Street (Thomas Dickinson Homes)

These Italianate style homes were built in 1873 and 1876 for Thomas Dickinson and his son Charles. An addition was added to 162 Marshall Street doubling the size of the house. Another remodeling done in 1898 added the two porches. Interestingly enough, the two porch foundations for this and the house next door were made from one huge piece of stone brought from the Thomas Cain Farm in Union Township. At Dickinson's death in 1904, his unmarried daughter Evelyn, inherited the house and lived there until her death in 1944.

31. East Pierce Street

East Pierce Street, like West Pearl Street has many grand Queen Anne style homes. Many of the residents here have chosen to restore their homes to their original beauty, including painting using the original historic exterior colors, rebuilding porches, giving the homes new tin roofs and restoring interior woodwork. Legend has it that a few of these houses are haunted.

32. Cornwell Court

12 Cornwell Court was the first house back in this secluded court yard. This house was built in 1922 and still features all of the original walnut woodwork. As typical of a 1920s bungalow, there are many built-in pieces as well. 9 Cornwell Court was built in 1926 and also features the original woodwork as well as the "contemporary" arches and sun-room, typical of that period as well. 15 Cornwell Court was built in the 1950s and 6 Cornwell was built in the early 1970s.

33. Grand Street

In its prime, this street truly was the most "grand" street in town. This street features many historic homes that have been renovated to their original historic form. Most of these houses have a Queen Anne feel to them, but vary in architectural styles.

34. 44 North Hudson Street (The Wesleyan Methodist Church)

Built in 1852, this church is the second oldest church in Coldwater. It was founded by a small group of people that left the Episcopal Church because they were strongly against slavery and wanted to help runaway slaves. This church has gone through many renovations and has borne

many names, including True Vine Fellowship Church. It is currently called the Church of God.

35. 45 East Chicago Street (Masonic Temple)

Built in 1869 and originally designed by Marcellus Parker, this structure has served three very different capacities. First it housed the Henry Clay Lewis vast art and statuary collection; it was considered the largest and best art collection west of New York City. The original building featured 25-foot ceilings, steam heat and skylights. Approximately 1,000 art pieces were displayed. The Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.) owned and operated this building from 1896 to 1914. The Masons purchased it in 1915. The façade of this building was then remodeled with a Hacienda Revival style featuring a large front porch and stucco on the exterior walls. A fire on April 6, 1954, caused \$85,000 in damage and led to more alterations and remodeling. This temple is also home of the oldest chapter of the Eastern Star in the world. Coldwater's chapter was originally number three, but when Rochester and Adrian lost their charters, Coldwater was given the honor of being number one.

36. Park Place

This street is home of Coldwater's only boulevard. Outlining this boulevard are some of the prettiest Queen Anne homes in this area.

37. Daugherty Street

The Daugherty family developed most of these houses around the turn of the century. Their idea of building a house was getting all of their friends together and having a party. They would bring barrels of wine and beer, and everyone would get to work building and having a great time. There are many evidences in these houses of just how good of a time they were having, such as crooked windows and door frames, slanted banisters and tilted ceilings.

38. 215 East Chicago Street (Chicago Pike Inn)

This Georgian Revival was built in 1903. Designed by Asbury Buckley, the home was totally restored in 1988 and is currently operating as a Bed and Breakfast. The home features cherry woodwork, beamed ceilings, and a double staircase with a Kokomo stained glass panel over the window seats on the stair landing.

39. 27 South Jefferson Street (Wing House Museum)

This second empire home was built in 1875 for newlyweds Jay and Frances Chandler. The home features a convex mansard roof, which is sheathed in tin. Lucius M. Wing bought the home in 1882 and it remained in the Wing family until purchased by the Branch County Historical Society in 1974. The Historical Society has applied authentic colors of paint to the exterior and the museum is open for tours.

40. South Hudson Street

Again, the residents here take pride in their historic houses. Though not all of these are as "grand" as some of the other houses in town, these have equal beauty. Ranging from Greek Revival to Queen Anne, each homeowner has taken extra care to keep the integrity of this historic neighborhood.

41. 53 East Chicago Street (Lawyer's Office)

Henry C. Lewis was a successful businessman and benefactor of Coldwater. Among his gifts to the city was an art gallery which was next door to his beautiful Italianate home on East Chicago Street. (The art gallery no longer exists.) As befits a leader of the community, the first indoor plumbing in Coldwater was installed here in 1864.

42. 11 East Chicago Street (Putnam Funeral Home)

Built by Dr. John H. Beech in the late 1850s, this brick Italianate structure has been altered significantly. In 1870 Dr. Beech offered the parlors in his home for the newly formed "Ladies Library Association". Horace and Grace Kitchel purchased the home in 1907 and remodeled it. Stucco was added to the exterior, the cupola was removed, and the roof line was raised several feet. New dormers were added to the attic "ballroom", windows were enlarged and porches were changed. It is almost unrecognizable compared to the original home. In 1936 the home was sold to Frank and Lulu McConkey to be used as a funeral home. Kenneth and Eleanor Putnam bought the home on August 6, 1946, and it continues today as a funeral home.

**For more historic information on
Branch County and Coldwater
visit the
Branch County Library.**

**Coldwater Downtown
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