

Torrington Library Self-Guided Tour Locations

First Floor

- Reading Room
- Rotunda
- Large Print
- Nonfiction Stacks
- Teen Room

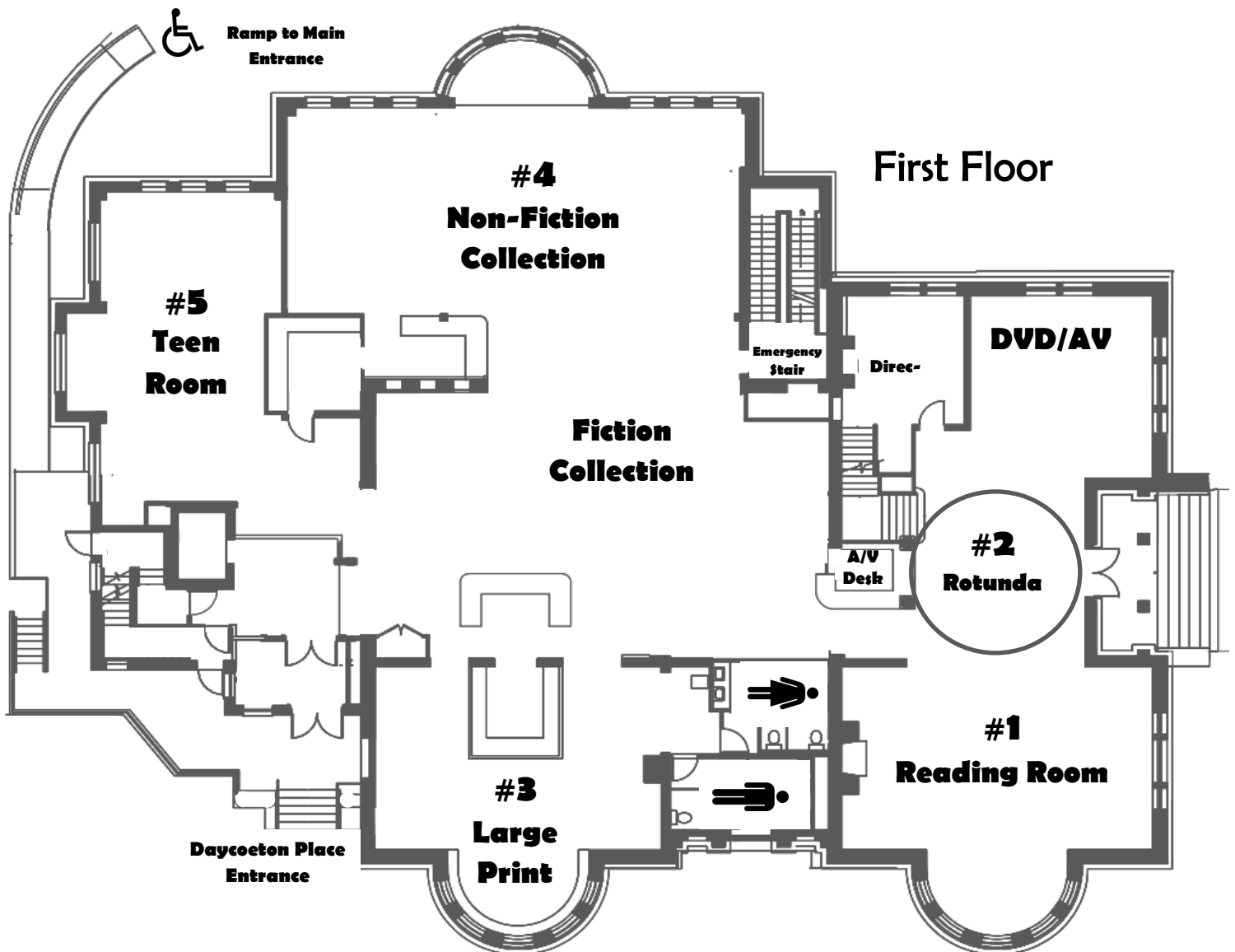
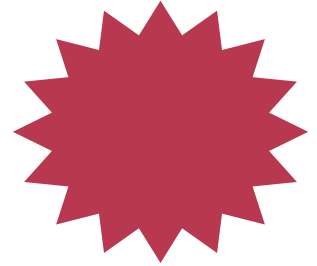
Second Floor

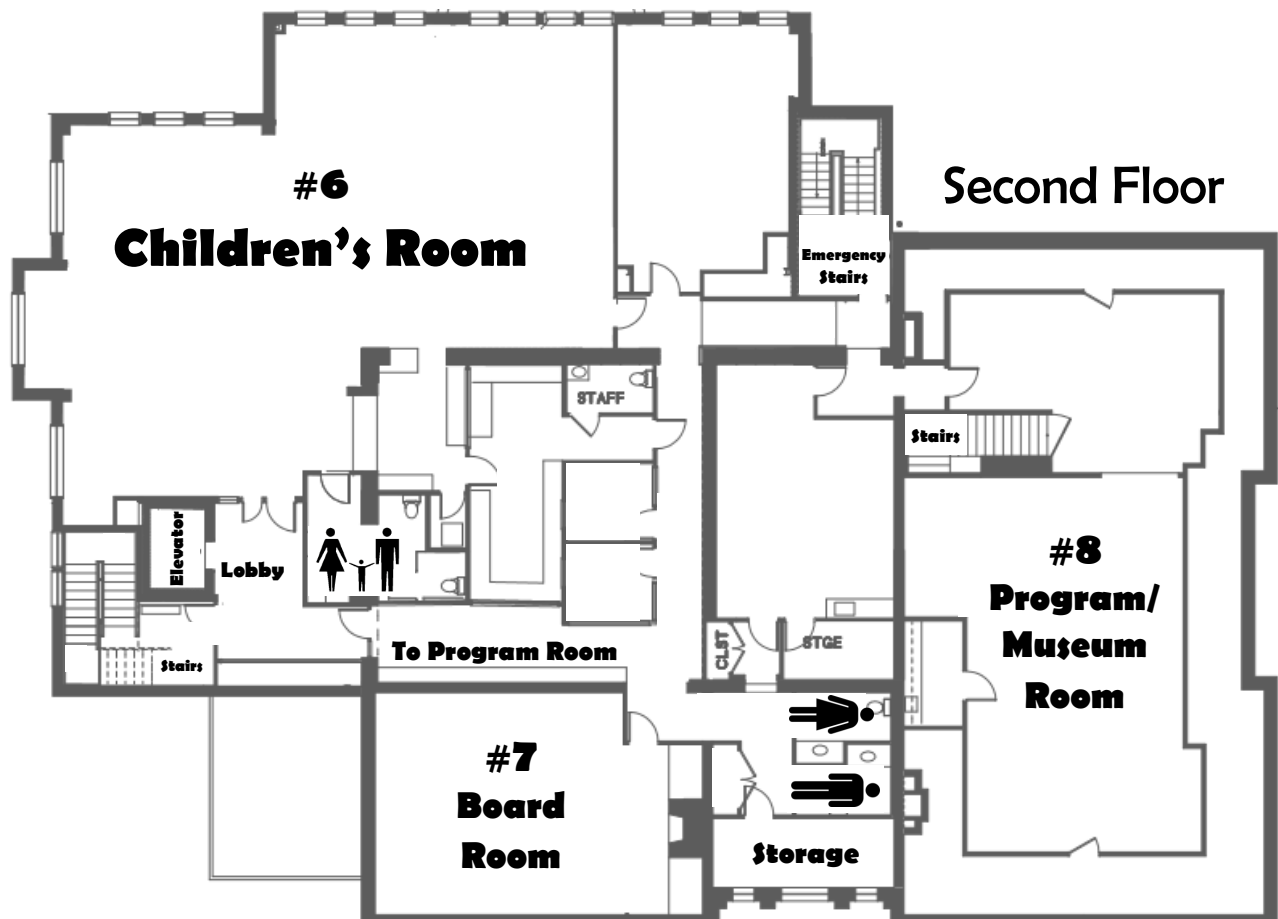
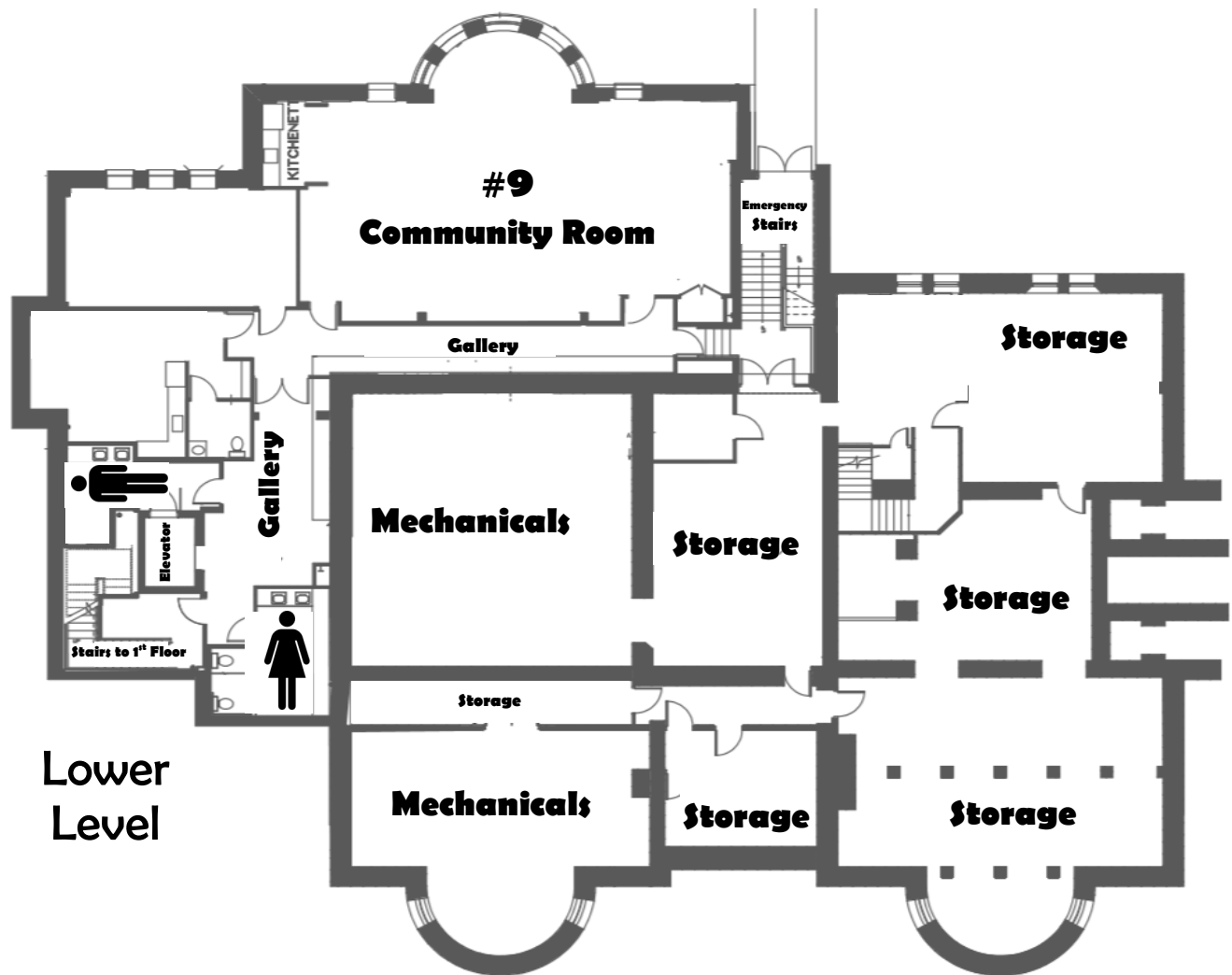
- Children's Room
- Program Room
- Board Room

Lower Level

- Community Room

Helpful hint:
Each location has a
maroon starburst near it!





Location 1: Reading/Reference Room

Library Background

- The Library was formed in 1864 as the Wolcottville Library Association. It became the Torrington Library in 1881.
- The Library is still privately funded and not city run.
- Before this current location, the organization moved between various locations throughout the community.

Construction of 1901 Building

- This current building began construction around 1898.
- The completed building was dedicated on September 11, 1901.
- It was designed by Ernest Greene and the original contractors were the Hotchkiss Brothers of Torrington and H. Wales Lines Co. of Meriden.
- The Reading Room, Reference Room, and Rotunda made up the original 1901 library.
- The land was originally the old Coe Carriage house. The Coe House sat next door in what is now Coe Park.
- The building and construction was entirely funded by former Board President Elisha Turner (founder of Turner and Seymour Co). Mr. Turner died almost a year prior to the dedication of the new building. He never saw its completion.

Restoration

- A drop ceiling was added in 1970 to accommodate modern heating and lighting. The drop ceiling covered most of the original coffered ceiling and rotunda dome.
- Carpet was also put down in 1970. The carpet was removed in 2010 and the hand-laid marble floors were found in excellent condition.
- The drop ceiling was removed and the coffered ceiling was restored during the 2015/2016 renovation.
- This restoration was made possible by Ronda and Harold Burns.

Portraits

The portraits are of past Trustees and founders of the Torrington Library. *(Beginning right of bay window and working your way around to the right)*

Lyman Coe

Orsamus Fyler

Edward Hotchkiss

John N. Brooks

Lauren Wetmore

Elisha Turner

Location 2: Rotunda

- The Rotunda Dome is original to the building and is made of plaster.
- It was intended to welcome guests from the Litchfield Street entrance (the large marble staircase facing Coe Park).
- The Program Room sits above the dome.
- The Corinthian columns and the mosaic pattern in the floor all mirror the circular shape of the dome.
- If you stand in the middle of the dome, you can hear an echo. The further from the center you stand, the less of an echo you hear. Why, you ask? If a **sound** is not absorbed or transmitted when it strikes a **surface**, it will be **reflected**. Concave surfaces (like the dome) cause reflections to be concentrated rather than dispersed. This causes an abundance of reflection (or sound) to be heard by the listeners in the focal point (like the center of the dome).
- Fun, right? Try it—you know you want to!

Dedication Plaques

Lauren Wetmore (left of double doors): Lauren Wetmore was one of the original founding fathers of the Torrington Library. He took a great interest in the library and bequest funds on which we still operate today. In 1864, Wetmore became a founding member of the Torrington Library. Shortly after, he donated the property of the Old Congregational Church to the library, which served as one of the organization's first homes before the construction of the Litchfield Street building. Wetmore was a passionate abolitionist and held meetings in the old barn on Water Street. The meetings were so popular that he had to hold them outside of the barn. Wetmore was known as a "grand old man" in town and would often stop into local organizations to offer a word of praise. He wrote "Early Days in Torrington" articles for the Register Citizen.

Elisha Turner (right of double doors): Elisha Turner, along with Lauren Wetmore and Lyman W. Coe, was one of the most influential supporters of the Torrington Library. As the Register Citizen Evening Newspaper stated upon his death *"to Elisha Turner, probably more than any living individuals, Torrington is indebted for its growth and prosperity during the last third of the century."* In 1864 Turner turned his attention to Torrington and transferred the Waterbury Hook and Eye Co. to the Turner and Clark Manufacturing Co., which later became the Turner and Seymour Company. He remained actively engaged in the Company and remained President until his death. Sadly, Turner died almost one year to the day of the grand opening of the new Torrington Library building, never seeing the final result of his labor.

Location 3: Large Print/Second Bay

- This room was the library's first Children's Room, but it was not original to the 1901 building.
- It was added in 1926 through a donation by Adelaide Coe Godfrey and her sister Ella Coe, daughters of Lyman Coe.
- It was designed to mirror the Reading Room with a second Bay Window.
- Unlike the Reading Room, these ceilings are plaster, but still mirror the coffered ceiling architecture of the original building.
- The Window seat was added in 1970.
- During the 2015/2016 Addition and Renovation, the Children's Room moved to the second floor, and this area now houses the Large Print collection.

The Coe Park Connection:

Adelaide Eliza Coe Godfrey and Ella Seymour Coe, along with their brother Edward Turner Coe, gifted the town with Coe Memorial Park on November 2, 1906 as a memorial to their parents, Lyman and Eliza Seymour Coe. It was formerly Lyman and Eliza's homestead. Before that, it belonged to John and Charlotte Hungerford (yes, that Charlotte Hungerford).

The house, large Victorian greenhouse and outbuildings were removed. The park covers 5 acres and was originally designed by James W. Scott, circ. 1907-08. In 1922, Adelaide established a Trust for the care of Coe Memorial Park, which still funds the park today.

There is a photo of the Coe house in the second floor corridor leading to the Board Room.

Location 4: Non-Fiction

- This is part of the new addition to the building designed by *Tuthill and Wells Architecture*.
- The “L” shaped addition added three stories and 13,000 square feet to the building.
- Contractors had to cut through around 4 feet of marble, brick and plaster and put in support beams as they cut to join the new space with the old space. It was a long and tedious project that took close to three weeks.
- Architects mirrored the other two bay windows and the wood molding of the original building.
- The marble behind the reference desk, as well as in the Children’s Room, is from the exterior of the original building.

About Tuthill and Wells Architecture

Tuthill and Wells has extensive experience designing libraries, including both new construction and renovations/additions to existing facilities. Over the past 20 years, they have been involved with 47 library projects, 29 of which have been historic buildings in visually sensitive locations. This experience enables them to offer expertise in working with traditional methods and materials to design not only additions to existing buildings, but also in the planning for new facilities which will become a part of a local community’s infrastructure and a reflection of the community’s character. Tuthill and Wells is also responsible for the Brooker Memorial building project.

Location 5: Teen Room

- The NEW Teen Room was added during the 2015/16 addition and renovation project.
- The room features new stack space, lounge seating, and computer stations.
- The Teen Advisory Board (TAB) creates the rotating book displays and also helps implement and plan teen programming.

About Burlington Construction: 2015/16 Contractors

Incorporated in 1973, Burlington Construction Co., Inc. is a privately-owned company providing quality, open-shop construction services in Connecticut, New York and Massachusetts. Their focus has been on commercial and institutional facilities, historic renovations and exclusive homes for the private sector.

Location 6: Children's Room

- The NEW Children's Room was added during the 2015/16 addition.
- The two service desks are cut into the side of the original marble building and feature the original dental molding.
- The Children's Room features ample shelving, free-play space, and an adjoining Story Hour Room for special events and programs.

Storybooks Through the Ages Mural Project, 2017

- The mural was designed and painted by local artist, Marc Stolfi.
- **Storybooks Through the Ages** is an expansive, 397 square foot mural that traces the history of children's literature from *Aesop's Fables* up through modern day classics, like Percy Jackson and the *Lightning Thief*.
- With colorful illustrations, this vibrant addition to the Children's Room is not only visually stimulating, but also a valuable teaching tool, emphasizing the significance of literature throughout the ages.
- **Storybooks Through the Ages** is more than just a mural. Hidden within the captivating paintings you will find historic Torrington landmarks and significant objects created in Torrington throughout its 275+ year history.
- Children are encouraged to search for these landmarks and items in an ongoing scavenger hunt. There is a handout (provided by the Torrington Historical Society) with the history of each building and item- strengthening our patrons' understanding of Torrington and its rich history!

Location 7: Board Room

This is original to the 1926 addition.

The room features The Holley Gun Collection. Mr. Horace Holley was paralyzed from the waist down at age 16 when he fell from a trapeze. He spent two years at New Haven Hospital for treatment then returned home. He lived with his brother in Westchester, VA and returned to Torrington years later. He traveled frequently, including to Cuba and Jamaica. He passed away in 1903 at the age of 43.

A newspaper history of the library in 1932 by Mrs. A.J. Barker read, *"In early nineties the heirs of Horace Holley placed in the Turner museum his collection of small arms and stuffed birds and animals, thereby giving pleasure to the people of Torrington. The children think the alligator is their own and like to look at the gila monster, with its tradition that when alive and a pet of Holley's, its diet was one hard-boiled egg a week."*

The stuffed animals have since been donated to White Memorial Conservation Center. However his gun collection remains at the library.

Torrington Library *Self Guided Tour*

Atop the bookshelf at the back of the room opposite the fireplace is a Solar Time Globe. The top dial is for the hour and the bottom dial is for the minute. It was patented by Theodore Ruggles Timby, circa. 1863. Only 600 were manufactured.

This room features our local history collection, which is accessible to all patrons within the library. The entire collection is catalogued and in our online system. Books from this collection cannot be taken from the library.

Portraits include Elisha Turner (large and to the right of the gun collection), John H. Brooks (above the fireplace) Issac W. Brooks (right of the fireplace and closest to solar time globe), and James Alldis (right of the fireplace and closest to secretary desk).

The display cases outside of the Board Room features:

- Additional guns from the Holley Collection
- Two letters written by John Brown to John Cook regarding the sale of cows because Brown was leaving on an expedition to Kansas.
- The original 1864 Trustees ledger tracing the formation of the library up through the second ledger, which extends to the 1950s.
- 1955 Flood Memorabilia.
- There is also a panoramic photograph taken after the Flood of 1955.

Location 8: Program Room

- The Program Room is original to the 1901 building and was formally referred to as the Turner Museum, named after Elisha Turner.
- In 2007, the space transitioned into the Program Room and is still the location for library events.
- The items in the display cases were donated to the library.

Special Collections

- The glassware collection, including cup plates, candlestick holders, and more, was donated by Ella Coe. Ella was the daughter of original founder, Lyman Coe.
- In the first display case, you will find Coe family memorabilia, including Eliza Coe's wedding jewelry, apostle spoons gifted to Eliza and Lyman on their wedding anniversary, and a collection of photographs of Lyman, Eliza, Adelaide, Ella, and Edward.
- The tumbler collection was donated by Virginia Weston Brooks.
- The Staffordshire Dish collection belonged to Elisha Turner.

The smaller of the two rooms features:

- A collection of John Brown items
- Donor plaques from the now-closed Beth El Synagogue
- A Revolutionary War discharge signed by George Washington.
- The international doll collection and Hummel collection belong to Deborah Goldthwaite and was donated in the mid 1980s.

Lining the walls of both spaces are historical items that include:

- Revolutionary War money notes.
- Items made from the dresses of Martha Washington.
- Local artifacts concerning Major William Besse.

Major William Besse

Besse was a Swiss immigrant who arrived in the country with little to no money. He became associated with The Brass and spent the last of his 58 years working there. After WWI, he became known as “The Major” because he organized a Home Guard infantry of 210 riffles, 50 machine guns, and a hospital unit. Near the end of his life, the library become one of his beneficiaries. Besse also donated much of his land to the town of Torrington for recreation, including Besse Pond and Besse Park.

Location 9:

Torrington Savings Bank Community Room

- . The Community Room is used for library events and is available to rent for lectures, meetings, private parties, and more.
- . The room can seat 100 people auditorium style, or can seat 36 for a luncheon or dinner.
- . The space features a small kitchenette and audio/visual equipment.
- . Next to this room is the small meeting room, which can seat 14 people around a conference room table. This room is also available to rent.
- . Before the 2015/16 addition and renovation, this space was the library employee parking lot!