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Georgia Library Spotlight - Buchanan-Haralson Public Library

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GLA SPOTLIGHT

Buchanan-Haralson Public Library

The Buchanan-Haralson Public Library, a member of West Georgia Regional Library, occupies the Haralson County Historic Courthouse. Completed in 1892, the two-story, red-brick building is an elegant example of Victorian architecture with corner turret, slate shingles, ornate woodwork, and a clock tower. The second story is still furnished as a courtroom, but it also serves beautifully as a large storytime space. The main floor has the original floor plan, and fiction stacks, children's books, and historical archives run through the old meeting rooms, clerk areas, offices, and vaults. It's a one-of-a-kind space that unites a historical sensibility with a contemporary purpose.



When all court business moved out around 1970 to a newer facility, the building sat empty for many years. The Haralson County Historical Society was formed to restore and preserve the building. Near the turn of the millennium, local leaders puzzled over a way to use this precious resource to benefit the community. "What about a public library?" was the simple sentence that began the library's journey. The Buchanan-Haralson Public Library began operation on February 15, 2003, and ten years later, the library has expanded to a full PINES service branch that offers thirty-two hours of service every week.

Branch manager Jana Gentry has been involved with this project from the very beginning. She

said, "I love this building from top to bottom. We have the gorgeous courtroom (my mind wanders back 100 years when I step in) where the sunshine streams through stained glass windows creating a colorful light show on the floor. The first floor is so full of beautiful wood, thick walls, and high ceilings, plus all our circulating collection. I even love the basement (dungeon in my mind) where you get a good look at the substantial foundation."

Buchanan is a rural area where many patrons do not have home computers. The library's role as technology center and access point to the Internet is an important service the library provides. The library employee's favorite programs are children's storytime and teen programs that receive above-average attendance for the regional system. Library staff

are happiest when connecting young people to books. At the end of April, the library will serve as one of West Georgia Regional's pilot sites for the Georgia implementation of the Every Child Ready to Read program, and library staff are looking forward to continuing to engage the community in early literacy efforts.

When asked about her plans for the library's future, Jana said, "I wish we had some grand plan for the future. My plan is just to do all we can to remain open and serving our community. I do have a personal goal of celebrating my ninetieth birthday sharing stories with children in the courtroom. Wish me luck!"