



Bulletin of the Kenton County Historical Society

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Covington's Historic Homes

Excerpts from Chuck Bricking's 48-Page Booklet
Titled "Covington's Heritage"

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As many as 50 years ago, local historian Chuck Bricking comprised a wonderful 48-page booklet on the most significant and historic homes within the city of Covington. Even at that time, many had already been lost to weather and age. Still, they should not be forgotten. The following are just a few of the homes he included.

Devou House

William Paul Devou was born in Cincinnati in July of 1855, the oldest son of William Paul, Sr. and Sarah Ogden Devou. The family relocated to Covington and William, Jr. received his elementary education in the common schools there. He attended high school and college in Germany.

When William Sr. died in 1897, Jr. received an inheritance of \$200,000 which he used to set himself up in the real estate business. He eventually amassed more than 300 properties in the Greater Cincinnati area and had a net worth of approximately six-million-dollars.

William Devou, Jr. was quite eccentric and was known to spend very little on his own personal needs. A good example of just how little money meant to him was demonstrated in the mid-1930s during the Depression. He threw away a ledger showing that his tenants owed him \$500,000 in back rents. He preferred horses to cars, and it was said he had only ridden in an automobile twice; once for his brother's funeral and later when he was taken to a hospital.

Devou continued to live on the family farm until age fifty-three. In 1908, the home on Montague Road and the accompanying 527 acres were given by Devou to the City of Covington, to be used as a park, and money was designated in his will to be used for the upkeep and maintenance. William Paul Devou, Jr. died in Cincinnati, on December 8, 1937, at the age of eighty-two.



In 1943, the original Devou home hit by a fire which destroyed the roof and veranda. Six years later, the City of Covington and the Covington Park board were given a collection of natural history specimens belonging to the late William Behringer by his heirs. The Devou House was then rebuilt and prepared to be used as a museum. Ellis Crawford served as the museum's first curator, and the house has been used as the Behringer-Crawford Museum ever since.

The Museum has been renovated several times over the years, including a major upgrade and expansion completed in 2007, and continues to be a major attraction for Covington and the entire region.

Stevenson Home

John White Stevenson was born in Richmond, Virginia on May 14, 1812. He received his early education at the Hampden-Sidney Academy and later graduated from the University of Virginia in 1832. Interested in law, he studied under Willoughby Newton and eventually started his own practice before migrating to Covington in 1841. He became a partner of James T. Morehead, whose office was located over the Cooper, Berry and Company building on Market Street and in 1843, married Sibella Winston of Newport.



Stevenson soon became a very successful lawyer and leader in the Covington community. He served a brief period as Kenton County Attorney and was also a member of the City Council. In 1845 he was elected to the Kentucky House of Representatives and was a participant in the Constitutional Convention of 1849. In 1857, he was elected to Congress, and in 1864 he became Lieutenant Governor under Governor John L. Helm. When Helm died in office in

1867, Stevenson assumed the duties of governor. Stevenson was then elected governor in 1868 and held the office until 1872. At the end of his term, he campaigned for and was elected to the office of United States Senator. He served in that capacity until 1877. Stevenson also served as president of the following institutions: the Cincinnati University law school, the American Bar Association, the Covington Literary and Library Association, and the Covington Bible Society.

On August 10, 1886, Stevenson died, leaving a wife and five children. His estate was valued at \$300,000. The home, located at the corner of Fourth and Garrard streets, was built in 1818 by Thomas Carneal. Stevenson purchased it in 1866 and remodeled it. Unfortunately, it was razed by the State in 1954 to build an Employment Commission.

Porter-Fallis-Lovell Home

The Fallis-Lovell home, located at 412 East Second Street and pictured below, was built in the



early 1850s in Italianate-style. In 1900, the twenty-room mansion was enlarged, redecorated, and transformed in Greek Revival. The first person to occupy the home was its builder, Thomas Porter, who resided there until 1861 when he sold it to Daniel Fallis, a Cincinnati banker. Fallis' daughter, Harriet Rogers, inherited the home in 1893, and *her* daughter, May Rogers, inherited it in 1922.

May Rogers met and married Howell Lewis Lovell and the house fell into his possession. Lovell was born in West Virginia in 1830. As a young man, he manufactured salt along the Kanawha River near Charleston, and in 1852 went to California in search of gold. Unsuccessful, he moved to Covington in 1868 and in 1871 became co-owner of the Lovell-Buffington Tobacco Company on Scott Street. He retired in 1892 and died in the early 1900s.

In 1950, the home was purchased by Julia P. Giancola. After her death in 1973, the home was sold by her daughter, Betty Mathis, to Dean Howe, Jr., for \$140,000, making it the most expensive single-family residence in Covington. While ownership has changed, it remains a private residence in 2019.

McLaughlin Home

The Charles McLaughlin, or Riverside House as it is also known, was built in 1916. McLaughlin was a native Covingtonian and multi-talented painter and architect. Located at 321 Riverside Drive, the house displays distinctive southern architecture. It is quite large and is modeled after the mansions of the Deep South. The home, which faces the Ohio River, was built high up from the street because of the ever-present threat of flooding.

The interior of the home has many interesting features, the most notable including a Victorian-styled parlor, a Czechoslovakian brass and crystal chandelier, and an American Empire mahogany table. The second floor has large windows with a remarkable view of the Cincinnati skyline. Throughout the home, the fifteen-foot tall walls are wonderfully decorated with paintings and other works of art.

Major restoration of the house took place in 1965, when the home was purchased by John Kunkel. He added the crescent-shaped brick wall in front, as

well as extensive landscaping. The interior of the home was also greatly remodeled. The McLaughlin home is often a starting point for historic tours of the Riverside Drive area.

Ernst House

Richard Pretow Ernst was born on February 28, 1858 in Covington. He attended public schools there as well as the Chickerings Academy in Cincinnati. He then enrolled in Center College in Danville, Kentucky, and graduated as valedictorian, with a Bachelor of Arts degree. He attended law school at the University of Cincinnati and upon receiving his degree, entered the law office of King, Thompson, and Maxwell. As years passed, he became a partner in the very successful firm of Ernst, Cassatt, and Cottle of Cincinnati, and was recognized as one of the finest lawyers in the United States.

In 1885, Ernst was elected to Covington's city council and served in that capacity until 1892. The following year, he was appointed Commissioner of the Queen and Crescent Railroad by Judge Taft and served as such for many years. Ernst served as a state senator from 1921-1927. He died in 1934.

In 1866, Ernst married Susan Brent of Covington, who bore him two children. The family lived at 401 Garrard Street. The house dates back to the mid-1880s and was built in a brick version of Queen Anne. It is believed that the house was designed by the noted Cincinnati architect Samuel Hannaford, who also designed Cincinnati's Music Hall. The large brick porch was a later addition.



Hearne Home

Jonathan David Hearne was born on August 7, 1829 in Bourbon County, Kentucky. He moved to Covington in 1861 and in 1870 he was elected to serve as president of the Covington branch of the farmer's Bank of Kentucky. Soon thereafter he founded the First National Bank of Covington and later became president of the Third National Bank of Cincinnati.

Well known in the area's business and banking circles, Hearne became involved in several profitable ventures and was acquainted with many distinguished Covingtonians of the era, including Jesse Grant and Amos Shinkle. He and Shinkle were not only good friends but were business partners. Hearne was always interested in the city and its people. Not only did he serve on the city council (1872-73), but he was also involved in directing many local projects, including the building of the Suspension Bridge.

Jonathan Hearne died on June 16, 1905. His home, situated at 500 Garrard Street and pictured on the cover, was built by Hearne in 1874. It was constructed in Victorian-Italianate style with a gazebo overlooking the Licking River. A carriage house and pagoda-shaped summer house still stand in the rear. From time to time, talk develops of extending Fifth Street into Newport with a new bridge which would require the razing of the Hearne Home. Since it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places, it is protected... at least for the time being.

Sanford House

Thomas Sanford was born in Westmoreland County, Virginia in 1762, and came to Kentucky about 1790. Soon after his arrival, Thomas acquired numerous acres of land in Northern Kentucky and began farming. As did many other men in the area, Thomas served in the Kentucky Militia in which he attained the rank of general.

Thomas eventually became involved in local politics and was the only member from Campbell County (Kenton County had not yet been established) to attend the Second Constitutional Convention in 1799. Thomas served in the state legislature as a senator and then as a representative in the early 1800s. In 1803, he became the first Northern Ken-

tuckian elected to Congress and served in that capacity until 1807. On December 10, 1808, General Thomas Sanford accidentally drowned in the Ohio River. He was forty-six.

The Sanford home, located at 1026 Russell Street, was built by Major Alfred Sanford, the general's son. Built in the early 1800s, it was originally constructed in Federal style, but was redesigned in French Empire style after a fire around 1815. The home remained in the Sanford family until 1835 when it was purchased by the Western Baptist Education Society. However, in 1853, as a result over the slavery issue between the Northern and Southern trustees, the Society closed.

Later, in the 1840s, the house was used as Miss Bristow's Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies and Misses, which was an exclusive finishing school of the period. Today, the home is privately owned and maintained.



Ashbrook House

William E. Ashbrook was born in Clark County, Kentucky on October 13, 1820. He received an ordinary education and, at a very early age, took strong interest in his father's stockyard business. In 1853, William went to New Orleans where he was engaged as a stockbroker.

In 1858, he began a long career as Sheriff of Kenton County. He married Mary Owen in 1860. During the Civil War, he was placed in charge of the stockyards in Covington and spent the rest of his life in that city. He served ten years on the city council, four years as waterworks commissioner and, in 1882, was elected Director of the City National Bank.

William Ashbrook died on June 10, 1882, at the age of sixty-one. His home, located at 1010 Russell Street, was used as a lodge meeting place for the Prince Hall Masons years after his death.

Carlisle Home

John Griffin Carlisle was born in Campbell (now Kenton) County on September 5, 1835. He was one of eleven children. With a strong interest in history, he began a career in teaching and studied law in his spare time with Judge William B. Kinkead.

At age eighteen, Carlisle left the family farm and became an apprentice with the law firm of John White Stevenson. In 1858, he was admitted to the bar and later opened his own law office at 521 Madison. He married Mary Jane Goodson. She bore him two sons, both of whom became lawyers.

Carlisle became heavily involved in politics on both the state and federal level. Beginning in 1859 in the House of Representatives, then moving to the State Senate. He closed out his state services in 1875 as Lieutenant Governor. He became Speaker of the House of Representatives three consecutive terms and then advanced to the United States Senate. In 1893, he accepted the appointment as Secretary of Treasury.

Carlisle died in New York on July 31, 1910. His body was returned to Covington and he is buried in Linden Grove Cemetery. His home, long since razed, was located on a large wooded lot at 1533 Garrard Street. The twelve-room structure was purchased by Carlisle and his bride in 1859.

Albro

The Harriet Albro house, located at 1041 Russell Street, was built in 1874 for the widow of Henry Albro, who was a Cincinnati dealer in fine woods and veneers. The house is Victorian in style and has nine spacious rooms. At the time of its construction, the only means of heating a home was wood burning fireplaces or stoves, and the only means of directing that heat was with the opening and closing of doors. For this reason, the Albro house has no fewer than twenty-eight walnut doors throughout its three floors.

In 1904, Harriet died and was buried in Highland Cemetery. The home was sold to Louis Kelfken,



a local grocer, for \$4,200. In 1979, the home was purchased for \$9,000 by Don Sanders, a steamboat captain. The Sanders completely renovated the home and it was sold again.

Grant House

Jesse Root Grant was born on January 23, 1874, in Deerfield, Pennsylvania. He was named for Jesse Root, who was for many years, the chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Connecticut.

Jesse's mother, Rachael (Kelly) Grant, died when he was eleven years of age, a loss with which his father, Noah, could not cope. His inability to properly care and provide for his children split the family apart. The younger children were adopted by neighbors and the two eldest, Jesse and his sister, Susan, were left to fend for themselves. Jesse secured a job as a tanner's apprentice and later, in 1808, moved in with Judge George Tod, a friend of the family, in Youngstown, Ohio. He lived there for two years and befriended George's son, David, who would later become the twenty-fifth governor of Ohio.

When Jesse turned eighteen, he moved to Maysville, Kentucky. There, he continued as a tanner's apprentice, soon graduating to a first-class tan-



Grant House, 518-520 Greenup Street, Covington

Courtesy Karl Lietzenmayer (all other images in this article courtesy the Kenton County Public Library)

ner. In 1821, he moved to Point Pleasant, Ohio because he “...would neither own a slave nor live where slaves were owned.” While there, Jesse opened his own tannery. It was also in Point Pleasant that he met and married Hannah Simpson. Ten months later, on April 27, 1822, the Grants were blessed with the birth of a son, Hiram Ulysses (later changed to Ulysses Simpson) Grant.

Jesse, having only six months of formal education to his credit, wanted something more for his son but, being of limited means, could not afford to send him to college. However, in 1839, with the help of Congressman General Thomas L. Hamer, Jesse secured an appointment for his boy to attend West Point Military Academy. This move later led Ulysses

to a brilliant military career and later still, to the United States presidency. In 1840, the family moved from Point Pleasant to Bethel, Ohio, where Jesse continued his tannery business. Twelve years later, Bethel voters elected him as their town’s first mayor.

In 1854, Jesse moved his family to Covington. There, he opened a leather goods store on Madison Avenue. In 1866, he was appointed Postmaster of Covington by President Andrew Johnson. Jesse served in that role until his retirement in 1872. Jesse Root Grant died on June 26, 1873. He is buried in Cincinnati’s Spring Grove Cemetery. The Grant House, at 518-520 Greenup Street, was built in 1850, but additions were made in both 1865 and 1870. The Grants purchased the home in 1859.

Though they owned both sides of the duplex, the Grant family only resided in the left half and rented the other. Many notable figures visited the Grant home, including General William Sherman, General George Armstrong Custer, Senator Benjamin Wade, and of course their son, General Ulysses S. Grant.

Koett Home

Albert B. Koett was born in Germany on May 23, 1863. At age fourteen he became a sculptor's apprentice and studied art for four years. He worked as a master sculptor and in 1884, emigrated to the United States. Residing in Cincinnati, Koett continued to follow his profession and was quite successful.

In 1885, however, Koett began working with the Wurlitzer Music Company and served in the manufacturing of instruments for over ten years. He married Blanche Mott who bore him four girls.

In 1903, Koett partnered with John Robert Kelley and formed the Kelley-Koett Company in Covington, which was devoted to the manufacturing of X-ray instruments and apparatus. The two men pioneered the development of this new technology soon after the discovery of the X-ray by scientist Roentgen. Their products, which were produced under the name "Keleket," soon became part of the equipment in nearly every hospital in the country, including the Mayo Brothers Hospital in Rochester, Minnesota.



During WWI, the Kelley-Koett Company produced equipment for government use and it underwent its greatest expansion and soon grew to be the largest such company in the world.

The Koett home, located at 515 Russell Street, is made of molded brick and highlighted by alternating rows of corbelling. Its round, arched windows have lead glass panes, and the curved, center section is accented by color tiles. *[For the complete Keleket story, see Northern Kentucky Heritage Magazine vol. III, #2]*

Nienaber House

John B. Nienaber was born in 1814 in Germany. He emigrated to the United States at age twenty-two and later married another German native, Mary Heying. They had three children.

In 1864, the Nienaber family moved to Covington, where John established himself in business. A tailor by trade, John opened his own tailoring shop and operated it successfully for many years. His true wealth, however, came from the buying and selling of real estate. John Nienaber died on May 31, 1884.

The Nienaber house, graced with excellent woodwork, was built in the Regency townhouse style by Howell Lovell. Construction began in 1855 but was not completed until after the Civil War. In 1900, the house, located at 327 Riverside Drive, was purchased and remodeled by Judge Graziani for his daughters, Mrs. Pendry and Mrs. Solar. The two families lived there until 1935.



Holmes Castle

Daniel Henry Holmes was born near Point Pleasant, Ohio in 1816. Orphaned at age two, he was raised by his uncle Samuel in the Columbia area of Cincinnati. There, he grew up with immigrant Louis Levassor's children, and learned French from them. As a teen, Holmes went to work for Levassor's dry goods store, then later went to New York to work for Lord & Taylor. When Lord & Taylor decided to open a branch in New Orleans, Holmes was sent to manage it, due partly to his knowledge of the French language. After six years, he opened his own store, the D.H. Holmes Department Store on Canal Street. While in New Orleans, he met and married Eliza Kerison in 1847. They had three children, a son and two daughters.

Holmes' business venture required him to travel often between New York and New Orleans, so he decided to build a home near the halfway mark, that being Covington, Kentucky. In 1852, Holmes purchased nearly seventeen acres south of town. At that time, the city limits extended south to only 12th Street. The land came with a colonial-style home.

When the Civil War broke out in 1861, Holmes considered removing his family to Europe as a safety precaution. The only family member willing to go, however, was Daniel Jr., who enrolled in a school in Paris. Mrs. Holmes and her daughters chose to remain in Covington.

In 1866, Holmes began construction of his "dream home," which replaced the original colonial residence. The castle, or "Holmesdale" as it was commonly referred to, was built in English-Gothic style, modeled after a building in Seine, Italy, which Holmes had seen and admired in his travels abroad. The structure was three-stories high and was equipped with a hot-air furnace, as well as a fireplace in each of its thirty-two rooms.

In 1898, at the age of eighty-three, Daniel Henry Holmes, Sr. died while visiting friends in New York. Funeral services were held in Covington and he was buried in New Orleans.

The castle remained in the family until 1916 when the family took up permanent residency in New Orleans. The structure was sold to the Covington



Board of Education for \$50,000. In 1919, the castle officially became Covington High School, but the school was later changed to Holmes High School. Additional buildings for the senior high and junior high were soon added. In 1936, however, because of rising heating and maintenance costs, the School Board had the structure demolished and replaced it with a more modern structure. *[For the complete story, see Northern Kentucky Heritage Magazine vol. III, #2]*

Coppin House

John Roberts Coppin, one of Covington's leading, influential, and most enterprising citizens, was born on Christmas Eve, 1849, in Cincinnati, Ohio. As a young man, he was educated in the public schools there and upon graduation, he developed an interest in the buying and selling of dry goods.

In February of 1873, Coppin decided to go into business for himself and rented a building in Covington from Captain John Fennessy for a five-year term. Located at 607 Madison, Coppin's California Dry Goods Store soon became a successful enterprise. Though quite small, the store became known throughout the area as a place for quality clothing.

When the five-year lease expired, Fennessy sold the building to M.C. Motch, the popular jeweler,

Kentucky Trivia

A new, ongoing feature from Michael Crisp's

"The Best Kentucky Trivia Book Ever," available at
bookstores or at michaelcrisponline.com

This issue features

Counties

Questions

1. How many counties are in the state of Kentucky?
2. What are the three oldest counties in the state?
3. In terms of geography, what is the largest county?
4. What is the most populous county in Kentucky?
5. What county is recognized as the "Covered Bridge Capital of Kentucky?"
6. What county, located in southern Kentucky about thirty miles east of Mammoth Cave, is named for the eighth governor of Kentucky?
7. What western Kentucky county was named after the inventor of the first successful steamboat?
8. What county was actually named after a creek?
9. What Kentucky county is named after the type of tree that is predominant in its region?
10. What was the most recently created county?

Answers

1. 120, placing KY 3rd behind TX (254) and GA (159)
2. Fayette, Jefferson, and Lincoln
3. Pike County, which measures 787.6 square miles
4. Jefferson County, which has over 740,000 residents
5. Fleming County
6. Adair County, named for John Adair
7. Fulton County, named after Robert Fulton
8. Jessamine County, which is named after Jessamine Creek
9. Laurel County, which is named after the Mountain Laurel trees which are found throughout the region
10. McCreary County, which was formed in 1912. It is the only Kentucky county that does not have an incorporated city

for \$7,010. Coppin then moved his business to a much larger storefront, leasing 538 Madison from M.C. Motch for five years with an option to buy the building. With the additional space, Coppin was able to expand his line and soon had employed twenty-five employees.

In 1875, Coppin married Lizzie R. Egolf of Cincinnati, who bore him four children. In 1892, the family made plans to build a home in Milldale at a cost of \$12,000. Milldale is now the neighborhood of Latonia. The home, a large, beautifully appointed structure, was located at the present site of Ninth District School. [For the complete story, see *Northern Kentucky Heritage Magazine* vol. III, 32]



Want to be Published?

We are always looking for material for
the Bulletin, as well as
Northern Kentucky Heritage Magazine

To submit an article, send a paper copy by mail,
or email it as a Word document attachment.

Bulletin articles should be no longer than 500
words and should have at least two references.
Magazine articles should complete with references
and endnotes, as well as images or graphics.

Email us if you have any questions.
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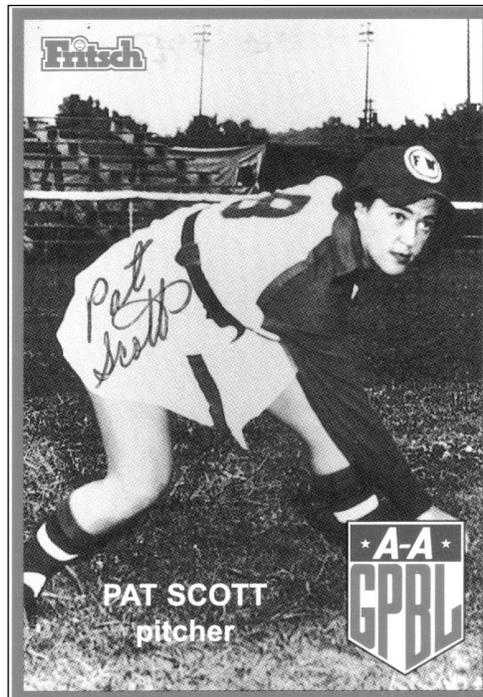
Then and Now



Left: Boone County Airlines in approximately 1945. Right: Just a small portion of the tremendous acreage of the Cincinnati Northern Kentucky International Airport in 2019.
Left image courtesy Kenton County Public Library, right image courtesy Twitter

Mystery Photo

Can you identify the Mystery Photo? The answer is found below.



Answer:

Official collectable baseball card of Patricia "Pat" Scott. Covington-born, she is one of only about 300 girls to play for Wrigley's All American Girl's Professional Baseball League.

Kenton County Historical Society

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ARTICLES FROM BACK ISSUES ARE INDEXED ON OUR WEBSITE!

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I Bet You Didn't Know

*Tidbits from Kentucky's heritage
for every day of the calendar year*

November 1, 1793: The State Legislature met for the first time in Frankfort, which had been designated as the permanent capital.

November 3, 1806: Aaron Burr was charged with treason and tried in Frankfort. Defended by Henry Clay, he was acquitted.

November 4, 1939: The Renfro Valley Barn Dance moved from WLW radio in Cincinnati to its own station in Renfro Valley, KY.

December 4, 1868: One of the worst steamboat accidents in history occurred on the Ohio River near Warsaw.

December 11, 1750: Isaac Shelby, Kentucky's first governor, was born in Maryland.

December 13, 1818: Mary Todd (Lincoln) was born in Lexington.

From: *On This Day In Kentucky*, by Robert Powell

Programs and Notices

Kenton County Historical Society

Antiques Fair: Saturday, October 26, 11:00-2:00, Covington branch of the Kenton County Public Library; attendance has been good at previous fairs by people seeking to have their antiques appraised by professionals.

"Northern Kentucky Unearthed," Travis Brown et al.: Saturday, November 16, 10:30 a.m., Erlanger branch of the Kenton County Public Library. Relatively new hand-held devices (metal detectors) have made unearthing lucky finds of signature artifacts more popular with hobbyists. Professional archeologists may abhor amateurs who remove artifacts from historic sites for private collections or for profit. Amateurs and professionals recognize legal restrictions on public lands.

Documentary on Race Car Driver Stan Bowman, with John Lucas: February 1, 2020, 1:00 p.m., Covington branch

Behringer Crawford Museum

Holiday Traditions@BCM opens November 16th This is the 28th year for BCM's *Holiday Toy Trains* display with its 250 feet of track and more than 30 guest-activated displays. Guests can also enjoy *Wahoo's Winter Wonderland*, a kid-size, animated exhibit based on the children's book by Kenton Hills author Diana Grady, "The Holiday Adventures of Wiley Wahoo & Me," plus special Polar Express and Wahoo readings, Santa visits, Charles Dickens Victorian Village display, concerts and more.

Book Readings for Children, local librarians will read aloud from Grady's book and the Christmas classic, "Polar Express." The readings will take place at 2 p.m. on Dec. 1, 8, 15 and 22. Holiday finery or comfy PJs are encouraged for the story hours, which include crafts, refreshments and a visit from Santa. Activities are included with museum admission, but space is limited, so reservations are required by the preceding Friday. Register at education@bcmuseum.org or call (859) 491-4003.

Several local communities are sponsoring special hours for their residents to visit Holiday Traditions@BCM for free. Guests must show proof of residency. Special hours are:

- * Park Hills Day, Sunday, December 1, 1-5 p.m.
- * Edgewood Night, Friday, December 6, 6-8 p.m.
- * Ludlow Day, Saturday, December 14, 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
- * Fort Mitchell/Lakeside Day, Sunday, December 15, 1-5 p.m.

The exhibits are free for museum members. For non-members, they are included with paid admission: \$9 for adults, \$8 for seniors 60+ and \$5 for children. Wednesdays are Grandparent's Days: one grandchild admitted free with each paying grandparent. Parking is free. For more information, call 859-491-4003 or go to www.bcmuseum.org.

For information on the museum's other holiday activities: bcmuseum.org