

View of the Past

Local museums have much variety to offer with historical perspective

By **ANGELA HENDERSON-BENTLEY**
For The Herald-Dispatch

Many people use their summer vacations to travel to museums to learn about the history of our country. But there are museums right here in our area that allow you to experience that history for free. Here are four of them that cover both Tri-State and national history from several angles.

Lawrence County Museum

The home of famous abolitionist Rev. John Rankin is a well-known tourist attraction in Ripley, Ohio. But what is not as well known is that Rankin actually died in his granddaughter's home in Ironton. That home, known as the Colonel George N. Gray House, is now the site of the Lawrence County Museum.

The museum, located at 506 South 6th St., displays Rankin's bed, rocking chair, desk, glasses and Bible in an upstairs bedroom.

"We really have more than they do at Ripley," Fondalene Alfrey, one of the museum's volunteers, said.

Also on display in the museum are numerous



Photos by Angela Henderson-Bentley/For The Herald-Dispatch
An early RCA TV is on display at the Museum of Radio and Technology.

artifacts from the history of Ironton and Lawrence County. The desk of John Campbell, the founder of Ironton, is on display, and there are many items related to Ironton's iron furnace history.

"Ironton was founded on iron furnaces," Alfrey said.

"It was an iron town."

The museum's Nannie Kelly Wright Room contains a dress and other items belonging to Wright, the only female ironmaster the area has ever known. Items belonging to the Gray family are scattered throughout the house, which was built in 1874.

Ceredo Museum

If learning about the history of the Tri-State is something that interests you, then you'll feel like you've hit the jackpot at the Ceredo Museum, 501 Main St., in Ceredo.



Items belonging to Nannie Kay Wright, the area's only female ironmaster, are on display in the Lawrence County Museum.

The museum is filled with books on Wayne County families that have proven to be extremely helpful for people researching genealogy projects. And the museum's director, Carroll Conner, is always happy to help.

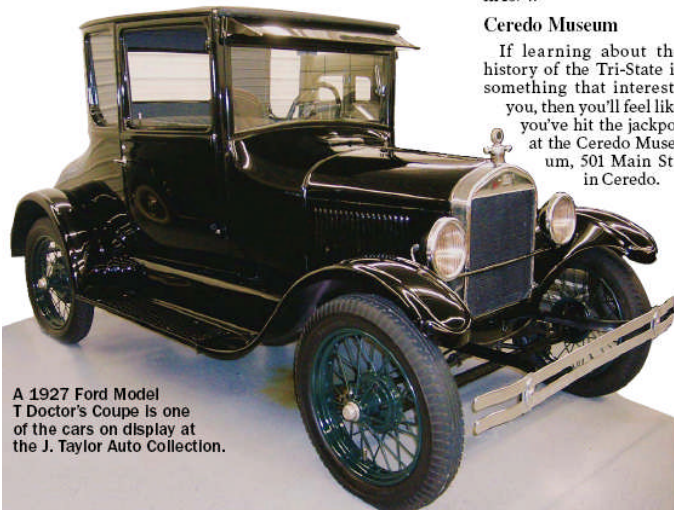
"I feel real fortunate to have been a part of this," Conner said.

Over the years, Conner has collected an extensive amount of items from people in the area. Military uniforms, foreign money, international flags and mementos from businesses long gone are just some of the items that fill the museum's glass cases.

"People bring stuff here because they know it will be taken care of," Conner said.

The museum's very first artifact was the Ceredo Petroglyph, which was pulled from the Ohio River and dates back 3,000 years. Also of interest is a saddle belonging to Z.D. Ramsdell, one of Ceredo's first settlers, a collection of books signed by Mark Twain and a glass collection featuring pieces from 60 different glass companies. And there are many items from Ceredo-Kenova High School, including band uniforms

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A 1927 Ford Model T Doctor's Coupe is one of the cars on display at the J. Taylor Auto Collection.

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and a complete collection of C-K High School yearbooks.

"My goal is that nobody would come in here and say it's not worth it and shut the door," Conner said.

J. Taylor Auto Collection

History isn't just found in a book or on a shelf. It can also be found in the form of antique cars that show just how far we've come in the way of transportation.

The J. Taylor Auto Collection, 1404 Washington Ave., in Huntington, has more than 30 cars ranging in age from 1898-1966, with most of the cars being from the 1920s and 1930s.

The museum's owner, Jimmie Taylor, has been collecting cars for more than 50 years.

"One day I thought I'd put them together and see if people would like it," Taylor said.

Among the highlights of the museum are a 1940 Packard that was custom made for the wife

If you go

Lawrence County Museum, 506 South 6th St., Ironton
Hours: 1 to 4 p.m. Friday-Sunday (April to mid-December)
For more information, call 740-532-1222.

Ceredo Museum, 501 Main St., Ceredo
Hours: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday
For more information, call 304-453-3025.

J. Taylor Auto Collection, 1404 Washington Ave., Huntington
Hours: 5 to 9 p.m. Thursday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday
or by appointment

For more information, or to make an appointment, call 304-522-2864.

The Museum of Radio and Technology, 1640 Florence Ave., Huntington

Hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday.
The museum is open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday from mid-April to October.

For more information, call 304-525-8890.

Admission for all four museums is free.

of financier J.P. Morgan and a 1930 Cadillac Limousine with a rare 16 cylinder engine. Plus, visitors can see the car Taylor calls a "once in a lifetime" ownership opportunity — an 1898 Steam Runabout.

"I try to have a car in here for everybody," Taylor said. "Some of the older people who come in here had these same cars. It

reminds them of their youth."

The Museum of Radio and Technology

Not too far from the Auto Collection is the Museum of Radio and Technology, located at 1640 Florence Ave., in Huntington. The museum is home to a large collection of radio and television equip-

ment and other technology dating back to the late 1800s, divided into rooms according to decade.

"If people want to see how communications started and how it ended up today into the cellphone and the computer, they've got the whole history here," Geoffrey Bourne, the museum's curator, said. "And we're probably one of the largest radio museums or technology museums in the country."

The rarest item in the museum is one of the television cameras from the 1939 New York World's Fair when television was introduced. It is the only one still known to be in existence, according to Bourne.

Also on display are some of the earliest computers, including the first portable computer. The museum is also home to a ham radio station and the West Virginia Broadcasting Hall of Fame.

"It's a one-of-a-kind type place right here in western West Virginia," Bourne said.