



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Birmingham Museum to offer “A Peek at Christmas Past” at the historic Hunter House during December**

**BIRMINGHAM, MI**, November 25, 2019—The 1822 John West Hunter House is the oldest house in Oakland County, and has seen plenty of Christmas seasons come and go—196 to be exact. The celebration of the season has evolved over those years with modern culture such as Christmas shopping and holiday lighting displays. Yet as the holidays approach, we often gravitate toward older traditions from simpler times. And, for those seeking a sense of an old-fashioned Christmas, the Birmingham Museum will share treasured holiday items and other keepsakes from Birmingham families of the past as part of its ‘Christmas Past’ display inside the Hunter House during the month of December.

Museum visitors will be able to glimpse holiday traditions and featured artifacts from the earliest settlement of Birmingham two centuries ago (including the sleigh bells belonging to the John West Hunter family) to an array of 1960s photos of a Christmas celebrated in the Hunter House by its last occupants, the Flacks. In between will be vintage holiday postcards and photos of decorations from the Victorian period and a World War I era Christmas tree, as well as displays with antique toys and ornaments. Docents will help visitors learn about these earlier traditions and how they were expressed in Birmingham.

Another highlight of the display will be a private collection of original and reproduction *springerle* cookie boards (molds) dating back almost 200 years. **Museum staff member Donna Casaceli**, who specializes in historic food ways, said that the German tradition came to Michigan with the earliest settlers.

“Making these holiday dessert treats was a huge undertaking. First, the specialty dough was mixed and had to cure for about 24 hours so it was the right texture,” said Casaceli. “Then it was pressed by the boards into traditional, highly detailed forms,” she added. “After baking, the cookies were laboriously ‘painted’ with dyed icings and sugars to create true works of art. It’s the basis for our modern Christmas cookie,” Casaceli noted.

Visitors who are or become members of the Friends of the Birmingham Museum during the month will receive a complementary set of usable reproduction vintage holiday postcards from the museum’s extensive collection, while they last. Annual membership is \$25/person, \$40/family. Or, regular museum admission applies: \$7 adult, \$5 seniors and students, kids 5 and under and members are always free. To find out more, call the Birmingham Museum at **248-530-1928** or visit us online at [www.bhamgov.org/museum](http://www.bhamgov.org/museum).

*The Birmingham Museum is located at 556 West Maple. Exhibit hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m., and until 8:00 p.m. on the second Thursday of the month. Two hours of free parking is available at the Chester Street Parking Deck; credit card required for entry and exit. For more information, call 248-530-1928 or visit [www.bhamgov.org/museum](http://www.bhamgov.org/museum). Museum admission is \$7 for adults; \$5 for students and seniors. Kids 5 and under and Friends of the Birmingham Museum members are free.*