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William Paul Devou was born in Cincinnati, Ohio in July of 1855. He was the oldest son of William Paul Sr. and Sarah (Ogden) Devou. The Devou family lived on a large farm in Covington which they had purchased from James M. T. Eubanks. William received his elementary education in the local common schools, but attended high school and college in Germany.

When William's father died in February of 1897, William inherited \$200,000 and used the money to set himself up in the real estate business. Eventually, he amassed a great fortune and at one time possessed as much as 300 pieces of property in the Greater Cincinnati Area. He owned so much property in fact, that he was nicknamed the "king of Cincinnati's west end."

Despite his wealth, which was estimated to be around six million dollars, money meant nothing to Devou except as an added incentive to work. Rarely did he spend more than \$300 a year on his personal needs. A good example of just how little money actually meant to him was demonstrated in the mid 1930's when, at the end of the depression, he threw away a ledger showing that his tenants owed him \$500,000 in back rents.

Besides being charitable, Devou was also quite eccentric. He preferred riding horses to cars and was known to have ridden in an automobile on only two occasions; once when he attended his brother's funeral, and again when he was taken to the hospital. When he became too old to ride his horses, he either walked or took a street car.

Devou continued to live on the farm until he was fifty-three years old. When his mother died in 1908 he moved to Cincinnati where he spent his remaining years in one of his own apartments. On December 8, 1937, at the age of eighty-two, William Devou died of bronchial pneumonia at Saint Mary Hospital. His funeral was held on December 11 at Wiltsee's Funeral Home at 24 West Ninth Street in Cincinnati.

The Devou house, located at Montague Road in Devou Park, was built circa 1848. In 1910 the house and 527 acres was given by Devou to the City of Covington, and money was designated in his will to be used for the upkeep and maintenance of the park.

On December 6, 1943 the Devou house, inhabited at the time by Wallace Rich, was ravaged by fire of undetermined origin. The fire destroyed the roof and veranda and caused an estimated \$12,000 damage. In 1949 the City of Covington and the Covington Park Board were given a collection of natural history specimens belonging to the late William J. Behringer by his heirs. The house was then rebuilt and prepared to serve 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.