

# Shorten Your Christmas List at Maple Croft

BY SALLY BAIR

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Homemade, handcrafted and country — if that's the look you want, then a visit to Maple Croft shop near Willow Street, will not disappoint you. Located where Route 222 South and Penn Grant Road intersect, the former schoolhouse basement has been turned into a veritable storehouse of items which should shorten any Christmas list.

Co-owned by Pam Rankin Hults and her mother Ruth Rankin, the shop has been open only since June and offers a variety of decorating ideas with brass, copper, tin and wood along with gifts handcrafted by about 40 local craftspeople.

The shop in many ways looks almost like a Santa's workshop

because of the wide variety of things to choose from and because Pam's working desk is tucked away in one corner of the shop.

One of the crafts for which Pam is well known is making replicas of people's homes in solid blocks of wood.

"We do houses by order and to scale," she explains.

When asked how she got interested in painting these small replicas, she says, "Probably because my parents always worked on people's homes." Pam's father Earl is a contractor and Ruth often helps with interior decorating.

In a takeoff from the wooden replicas, Pam also makes miniature houses suitable for use as tree decorations. While they



Ruth Rankin, left, and her daughter, Pam Rankin Hults, string some clay dough ornaments which will help make their Maple Croft shop more decorative for the upcoming holidays.



This work area is located in a well lighted stairway to the basement, and allows Pam to work on her artistry while tending the shop. Here, she works on her folk art and painting the houses which are her trademark.

have fine details like stones and bricks they are not replicas. Pam explained that she added them to her work because, "When you're at craft shows you have to have some smaller items. These make good hostess gifts and are more affordable."

An art education major in college, Pam taught for several years before moving to this area with her husband, and finding teaching jobs in short supply. About her art talent she says, "I must have inherited it." Her mother points out, "Ever since she was little girl I would find her sitting with paper and pencil in hand."

The artist in her really comes through in the franktur and folk art she creates to sell in the shop.

"There are no copies," she says. "Every one is unique. I may use pieces of original art, but I have never copied what someone else has done. As many different people who do frankturs, that's how many different styles of franktur there are."

She said her interest in franktur was a "family conspiracy" which got her to take the lessons at Landis Valley Farm Museum. She explains that she was single at the time and her grandmother said she would cook dinner for her on the



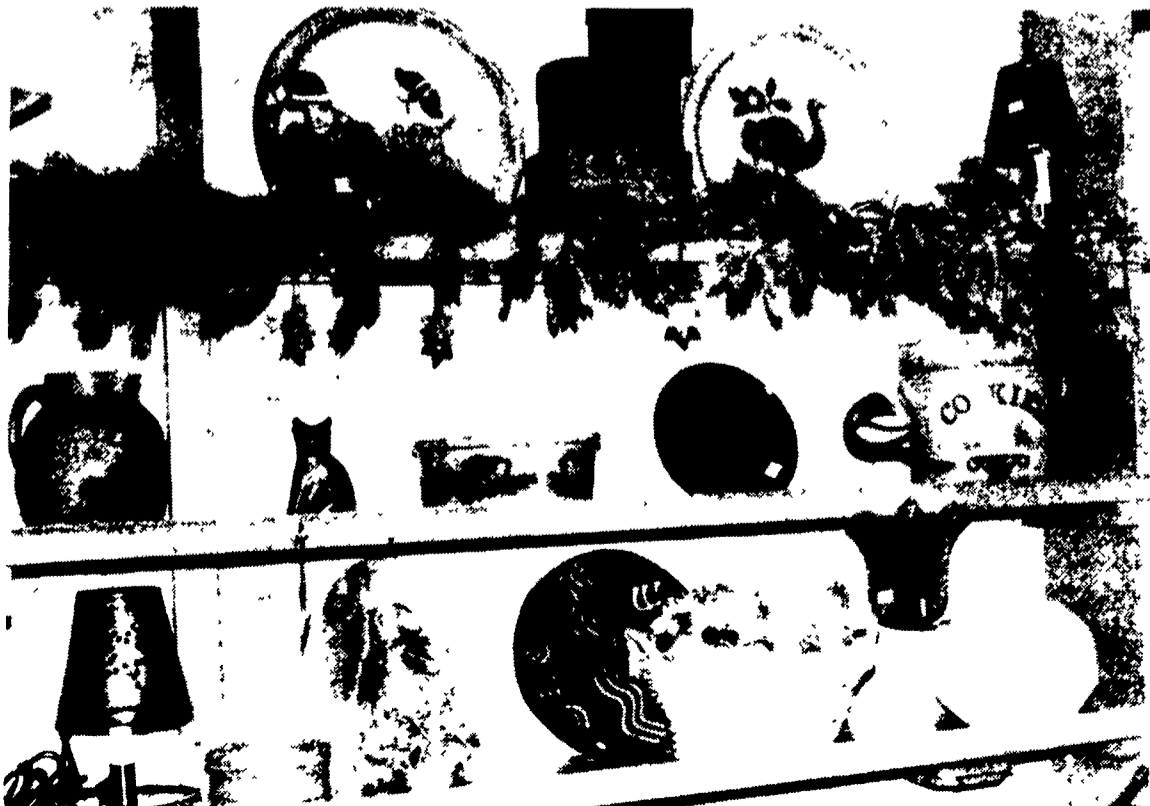
These houses are a trademark of Pam Rankin Hults, who began by making the larger homes as replicas of originals. She added the smaller homes as tree ornaments.

## Homestead Notes

nights of the classes, since she lived close by the museum. So everybody benefitted: Pam got delicious meals, her grandparents enjoyed her weekly visits and now the community can enjoy the rewards of her talent.

The idea for the shop is something about which Ruth says, "I always wanted to do." According to Pam, it was also an idea which she thought would never come to fruition.

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The Christmas holidays are coming quickly, and Pam Hults and her mother, Ruth, have decorated their Lancaster County shop to help put people in the mood. These shelves hold a few samples of the hundreds of items available in their Maple Croft shop.

