

The 'Gingerbread Lady' Travels to Washington, D.C.

BY SALLY BAIR
Staff Correspondent

LANCASTER — The Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. is known far and wide as the repository of America's treasures.

Last weekend visitors there were treated to a Lancaster County treasure: genuine gingerbread houses created by Lancaster's Gingerbread Lady, Patti Hudson.

Through a chance encounter at an interdenominational retreat, with the person who schedules adult courses at the Smithsonian, Patti was invited to demonstrate making gingerbread houses and to give a workshop on making cookie cottages, the smaller version made from graham crackers. Patti says, "It was one of those miraculous things that you can't explain. I didn't even know they taught classes like this at the Smithsonian."

Forty people signed up for the lecture demonstration where Patti showed each step involved in baking, assembling and decorating the houses. To inspire workshop participants Patti carried with her about a dozen large houses, including churches, barns, swiss chalet-type houses and others. But it was a newly created covered bridge that captured everyone's attention.

The covered bridge was something Patti had been intending to make for years for a dear 4-H friend of hers in the Washington area, and the invitation to the Smithsonian provided the impetus to actually carry out her plans. Patti says the bridge was the most challenging thing she has created, primarily because of "the logistics of having water running under the bridge."

The challenge was met and the effect is stunning. The simple bridge has windows so that the horses and carriage are clearly visible from outside. The bridge is supported with gingerbread pieces covered with stone-like candy wafers. The "water" is blue and there are ducks "swimming" nearby. It is a wonderful recreation of a part of Lancaster's heritage, and received more attention than any of her other houses.

Patti also took along about 15 cookie cottages, each decorated in a different fashion. It was these that workshop participants made, but in making them, Patti also demonstrated the techniques necessary to make the larger houses.

Her biggest thrill, Patti says, was having the staff of the Smithsonian show such an interest in her work. "Here they are dealing every day with treasures and they were oohing and aahing over my gingerbread houses." She said their interest has made her put more value on the work she does.

About 15 years ago, Patti began making houses with her children, John, now 28, and Linda, 26. But what started as a family project eventually grew into a business, and about seven years ago, Patti began concentrating on the houses and offered them for sale. Working night and day she could barely keep up with the number of orders that came in. That hard work, however, is what she credits with "perfecting my skills."

In the last four years, she has concentrated on sharing her knowledge through workshops and demonstrations and finds her calendar filled with requests from as far away as New Jersey. She has offered workshops locally through the Penn State Extension Service.

Patti remarks that she finds it ironic that she began a career as a home economics teacher and has now come full circle to teaching again, something she thought she didn't care for.



This spring-summer house proved to be the highlight of Patti's year. The house was made for a 99-year-old woman who helped create the house with her daughter and granddaughter. The house features a vegetable garden and a large planter of geraniums.



This covered bridge received much attention at the Smithsonian Institution over the weekend. It was displayed as part of a lecture-demonstration given by Lancaster County's Patti Hudson who showed how to make a gingerbread house. The bridge features a carriage and horses going through the bridge, along with "running water" and ducks swimming nearby.



Patti Hudson, known locally as the "Gingerbread Lady," shows some of the cookie cottages and the covered bridge she took with her when she demonstrated at the Smithsonian Institute last weekend. She also conducted a workshop on how to make the small cottages, created from graham crackers.

Patti says that offering the workshops have challenged her and that some of her best ideas come from workshop participants. Patti adds, "I don't understand the dynamics of it, but my daughter calls it 'gingerbread therapy.' After people put together a house they are laughing and working

together and go away with a good feeling."

She says the highest compliment she ever received was when she was introduced locally as a "gingerbread missionary." When she questioned her introducer, the woman told Patti that she called

(Turn to Page B22)

See your nearest
SPERRY NEW HOLLAND
Dealer for Dependable
Equipment and Dependable
Service:

Addison, PA

Addison Farm and Industrial Equipment, Inc
US Rt. 40, P.O. Box 1
Addison, Pa
814-395-3521

Alexandria, PA

Clapper Farm Equipment
Star Route
814-669-4465

Annaville, PA

B H M Farm Equipment, Inc
R.D. 1
717-867-2211

Beavertown, PA

B&R Farm Equipment, Inc.
RD 1, Box 217A
717-658-7024

Carlisle, PA

Paul Shovers, Inc
35 East Willow Street
717-243-2686

Chambersburg, PA

Clugston Implement, Inc
R D 1
717-263-4103

Davidsburg, PA

George N. Gross, Inc
R D 2, Dover, PA
717-292-1673

Elizabethtown, PA

Messick Farm Equipment, Inc
Rt 283 - Rheem's Exrt
717-367-1319

Everett, PA

C. Paul Ford & Son
RD 1
814-652-2051

Gettysburg, PA

Yingling Implements
R D. 9
717-359-4848

Greencastle, PA

Meyers Implement's Inc
400 N Antrim Way
P O Box 97
717-597-2176

Halifax, PA

Sweigard Bros
R D 3, Box 13
717-896-3414

Hamburg, PA

Shartlesville Farm Service
R D 1, Box 170
215-488-1025

Honey Brook, PA

Dependable Motor Co
East Main Street
215-273-3131
215-273-3737

Honey Grove, PA

Norman D Clark & Son, Inc
Honey Grove, PA
717-734-3682

Hughesville, PA

Farnsworth Farm Supplies, Inc
103 Cemetery Street
717-584-2106

Lancaster, PA

L.H. Brubaker, Inc.
350 Strasburg Pike
717-397-5179

Lebanon, PA

Keller Bros Tractor Co.
RD 7, Box 405
717-949-6501

Lititz, PA

Roy A Brubaker
700 Woodcrest Av
717-626-7766

Loysville, PA

Paul Shovers, Inc.
Loysville, PA
717-789-3117

Lynnport, PA

Kermit K Kistler, Inc
Lynnport, PA
215-298-2011

Martinsburg, PA

Forshey's, Inc
110 Forshey St.
814-793-3791

Mill Hall, PA

Paul A Dotterer
R.D. 1
717-726-3471

New Holland, PA

A B.C. Groff, Inc
110 South Railroad
717-354-4191

New Park, PA

M&R Equipment Inc
P.O. Box 16
717-993-2511

Oley, PA

C.J Wonsidler Bros
R D 2
215-987-6257

Pitman, PA

Marlin W Schreffler
Pitman, PA
717-648-1120

Pleasant Gap, PA

Brooks Ford Tractor
W College Ave
814-359-2751

Quarryville, PA

C E Wiley & Son, Inc
101 South Lime Street
717-786-2895

Ringtown, PA

Ringtown Farm Equipment
Ringtown, PA
717-889-3184

Silverdale, PA

I G Sales
Box 149
215-257 5135

Tamaqua, PA

Charles S Snyder, Inc
R D 3
717-386 5945

Troy, PA

The Warner Co
"For You The Farmer"
Troy, PA
717-297-2141

West Chester, PA

M S Yearsley & Son
114-116 East Market Street
215-696-2990

West Grove, PA

S G Lewis & Son, Inc.
R.D. 2, Box 66
215-869-2214

Churchville, MD

Walter G. Coale, Inc
2849-53
Churchville Rd.
301-734-7722

Rising Sun, MD

Ag. Ind.
Equipment Co, Inc
1207 Telegraph Rd
301-398-6132
301-658-5568
215-869-3542

Washington, NJ

Frank Rymon & Sons
201-689-1464

Woodstown, NJ

Owen Supply Co
Broad Street & East Avenue
609-769-0308