

# Dollhouses No Longer Belong Only to Little Girls

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HOLLIDAYSBURG — Dollhouse collectors are coming out of the woodwork. A new shop in Blair County is attracting the growing number of people interested in the world of miniatures.

Ray Cochran, Duncansville, and Bill Burns, Wehwood, opened the Holiday Dollhouse Works last October. Bill had been constructing dollhouses in his basement for several years, when he decided he had to get his business (including the dust), out of the house.

The small two room workshop at 415 N. Juniata St. in Hollidaysburg was the ideal place for Bill and his friend Ray to expand their interest in dollhouses. The partners take pride in designing miniature furniture for every room in the house.

"People prefer to buy our furniture," Ray emphasizes.

Most of the furniture is made from bass wood and stained with walnut, maple or oak. Some of the furniture is unfinished for those who wish to paint it. They also offer kits of plastic furniture.

Movable parts are very common on the furniture handcrafted by the co-owners. The rolltop desk actually opens, a cradle rocks and so does the rocking chair. Drawers in dressers, chests, dry sinks, and cupboards open. The dining tables expand and colorfully bound books line the shelves of the bookcases. There is a great demand for refrigerators, stoves, the canopy beds and the baby grand piano.

Remarkable care is taken when furnishing the dream home. It is possible that more attention is

offered to the small, elaborate doll houses, than to the large livable homes in which people live.

"Many people furnish one room at a time," explains Ray. Piece by piece is put into the house as it's afforded. He admits that the accessories are not cheap. He tells the story of seeing one client's dollhouse which is elegantly decorated with \$1,700 worth of furniture.

A Centre County collector draws pictures of her own furniture which she then mails to the custom builders. They duplicate her furniture in a mini-style. The artists are proud of their craft, displaying it for all to see.

Over and over again the craftsmen emphasize their willingness to cooperate. "We try to do anything that people want done, if it's possible," says Ray. "As long as we have time we'll do it." They even put pieces back together. Whether the dollhouse or furniture is damaged by the client, little hands, or chewed on by a cat (that has happened), Ray and Bill can make it right.

You would think working with such tiny objects would try your patience. They refute that by saying the work relaxes them. It's a hobby that the retired men have turned to for enjoyment and relaxation.

"There's no pressure. Bill and I didn't retire to have pressure," laughs Ray. "When this becomes a job that's when I get out of it."

They prefer to keep busy and as Ray confides, it keeps them out of their wives' hair.

Ray joined his friend in the "small business" when Bill opened the works last fall. But he says he



This bilevel dollhouse was custom designed by the Holiday Dollhouse Works. The specialty of the new business is constructing small copies of a client's own home.

has been around building for many years. Ray retired from selling insurance and an insurance claim's department after 32 years on the job. A retired railroad engineer, Bill has started to sell model railroads in the shop.

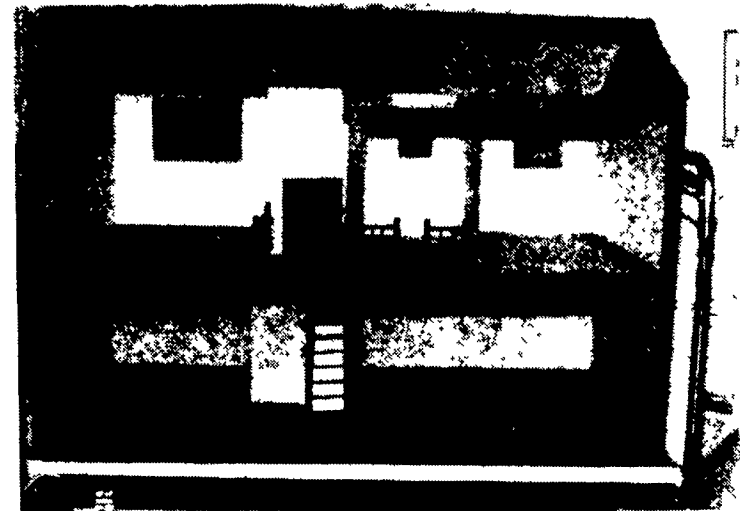
The place is not only a construction business, but probably most importantly a hangout for good friends. They have people making regular visits just to talk or take in a game of pinocle in the workshop. Depending on how many orders they have to fill, the men feel comfortable doing as much talking as working.

The pair have a few dollhouses ready to sell, but the majority of the time they will take orders before manufacturing the products. They get many architectural design ideas from area neighborhoods, magazines or advertisements. If they see a house they like, they make it. A specialty which is gaining in popularity is the special orders for scaled-down models of customer's homes. A picture is either supplied to the shop or they travel to the home to take their own picture and collect information. The miniature houses can be made two story with dormer windows, bilevel, ranch or whatever style a client occupies.

Every piece of the house is individually cut. The siding is cut piece by piece and painted. The doors and windows actually open and close and display glass. Cathedral ceilings are not uncommon in the houses. The parquet floors in each room sparkle and shine. Bill and Ray have a large selection of small print wallpaper to brighten each room. They cover the walls before the house is built, unless the client



Collectors think small, but the hobby is a growing investment. Dollhouses are now owned by as many adults as children. This one shows how elaborate the houses can be.



The owner of this dollhouse will easily recognize it. The house, including the wallpaper, is a scaled-down version of the customer's home.

prefers to do it at home. Some have been known to bring in scraps of material from the construction of their original house to have a perfect replica.

"You can have anything for a dollhouse that you have in your own home," admits Ray. They carry all the accessories to furnish a house. You can decorate with paintings, lamps, giftwrapped packages, dishes, vacuum cleaners and more.

Holiday Dollhouse Works sells kits, custom built homes or they will make you a kit to your specifications to put together at home. The houses vary in the way they are designed and constructed. Many of them have eight or nine rooms. Prices vary as much as the

homes contrast. The kits are \$20 and the custom built dollhouses start at \$150. Some of the more expensive models are wired to accommodate the ceiling lights and the outlets in each room.

They have been told by out-of-towners that a house could be purchased at the Hollidaysburg shop and sold elsewhere for double the money. The prices do seem to be readily accepted by customers from across the country. Most recently a house was shipped to Boston. It was topped with real asphalt shingles, mahogany floors and electricity.

Dollhouses are no longer the toys of little girls. Adults are purchasing dollhouses for themselves

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Houses vary with design and construction. The price depends on how elaborate the dollhouse is.



Anything you have in your home can be duplicated in a dollhouse. If Ray and Bill don't have the furniture you're looking for, they can make it. The co-owners of the Holiday Dollhouse Works say people prefer to buy their handcrafted wood furniture.

# Homestead Notes