

# Graybill Farm Home On Holiday Tour

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**AIRVILLE (York Co.)** On the twelfth week before Christmas, Nedra Graybill prepared for display twelve Snowbaby statues, eleven different angels, ten reverse-painted balls, nine David Winter houses, eight assorted dolls, seven curious critters, six Silhouettes figures, five paperweights, four decorated trees, three water globes, two gurgling fountains and the pickle hanging in the pine tree.

And that all made barely a dent in a stash of carefully-packed boxes filled with the hundreds of decorations and collectibles that will glisten, glitter, and glow throughout the holidays at Graybill's picturesque, turreted farm house east of Airville. Nedra's reputation as a holiday decorator is well-known among her friends and family, who eagerly anticipate seeing what new surprise she's added each season.

The Graybill home is one of several lovely, historic homes in the Airville area preparing for the first-ever Christmas in the Country holly tour to benefit the Collinsville Area Library. That tour is scheduled for Sunday, December 14, from 1 00 to 4 00 p m.

"I've always very much enjoyed going on holly tours of homes at Christmas; that was the reason I agreed to take part in this one for the library," explains Christmas-decorating enthusiast Nedra.

As a child growing up in Forrest Hill, Maryland, Nedra had an opportunity one holiday season to look at the Christmas tree in the home of school friends. She was fascinated with the village of miniature cottages that have been set up under the tree, the first she had ever seen. After her marriage in 1933 to dairy farmer Creed Graybill, Nedra designed a small "platform" under the couple's first

Christmas tree, fashioning it from a green, mossy material and using dried twigs for trees.

Over the years, the display has spread from a simple layout under the tree to collections filling every nook and cranny of the spacious Graybill farm home, with its marble fireplace, pocket doors, and original oak woodwork. As six daughters arrived in the family, Nedra's Christmas decorating team expanded.

"I usually begin Thanksgiving night, after our dinner is over," Nedra says of the month or more it takes to unpack, design, set up, hang and arrange numerous collections and displays of Christmas ornaments and artifacts. Some date to the family's earliest Christmas celebrations and many have been handmade by Nedra, her daughters, family, and friends. Each year the collection acquires several additions.

With the deadline of the mid-December Holly Tour, Nedra began unpacking boxes early, setting up the base of the platform display that covers a large corner of the living room and sets off the two large and one small Christmas tree located there. When two of her daughters and sons-in-law were available one day in late September, Nedra took advantage of the assistance to begin setting up the trees.

"When I had help, I got at it," she chuckles. It was fortunate that Nedra go such an early start; in late October, she slipped and fell, resulting in a cast on her broken left wrist. Her family, which always participates in the extensive decorations, rallied to help prepare the display for the holly tour.

Among the three generations of the family to lend a hand to this year's decorating efforts were four of the smaller great-grandchildren, who were given a small tree to decorate all by



**Nedra Graybill and her daughter Mildred Bacon are ready to welcome Christmas in the Country visitors to the Graybill farm home near Airville.**

themselves. Covered with whimsical decorations, the great-grandchildren's tree is a colorful focal point in the small den adjoining the Graybill farm kitchen.

Focal point of the house, of course, is the grand corner display of three trees, shining with lights and ornaments of many varieties - animals, bells, angels, birds, stars of various shapes plus, lots of creative, surprise ones that tickle the imagination.

"Here's a ball made from pajamas," points out Mildred Bacon, Felton, one of Nedra's daughters who shared many hours with her mother, decorating for the holly tour. Sure enough, the lovely ornament is covered with fabric recycled from a piece of nightwear.

"And here's the pickle," Nedra says, plunking from a branch a glittery, green, gherkin shape. The lighthearted ornament upholds a German tradition that the pickle is a symbol of good luck. Tradition further dictated that the first child to find the pickle on Christmas morning - the ornament have been hidden by the parents who decorated the tree in secret on Christmas Eve earns a surprise gift.

Spread beneath the trees is an elaborate fairyland community, its hills and valleys struc-

tured over boxes and blocks of styrofoam, all covered with puffy cotton and a sprinkling of artificial snow. Light shines from miniature buildings, a tiny-sized community sporting everything from a sparkling ice castle to shops designed from stained glass to a miniature Grand Ole Opry.

"The lighted barn was given to me by one of our daughters one year for Christmas," notes Nedra, pointing out the small red-ceramic structure with its company of whimsical animals. Before the barn lies a vast snowy meadow, overflowing with tiny people and animals and shimmery glass ponds on which skaters slowly circle.

Many of the assorted displays lovingly arrange throughout the rest of the Graybill home feature Nedra's extensive grouping of Christmas collectibles, including dozens of full-size and miniature Snowbabies, one of the headliner items of the Graybill home stop on the Holly Tour. Arranged in other areas of the house are Seraphim and Silhouettes statuary, as well as an array of angels. Still another display highlights Nedra's prized, reverse-painted Christmas balls, clear globes with intricate scenes painted on the inside of the glass.

"Again, that collection start-

ed with a gift from one of our daughters," Nedra explains, noting with a grin, "Once I have two of something, it's a collection."

Many of her collections took root at Tomorrow's Treasures, the Bel-Air, Maryland, gift shop owned by her daughter, Carolyn Crawford, Forrest Hill. In addition to Mildred and Carolyn, Nedra's four other daughters are Nancy Green, York; Doris Snyder, New Bridgeville; Nedra Jean Smith, Airville, and Theda Marie Otter, Forrest Hill. Their families and combined 13 children and 14 grandchildren provide an ongoing source of enthusiasm for the Graybill home's holiday decorating traditions.

As family members have become attached to certain ornaments over the years, Nedra often shares those favorites, passing on the holiday tradition. Knowing how much Mildred particularly admired a tiny glass lamp, Nedra gave it to her daughter some years ago. And, although Mildred had already removed her family's Christmas tree from their home, she promptly carried the lamp out to the discarded tree and hung it on a branch.

As Nedra and Mildred talk about the displays, they reminisce about Christmases past. One year, a tree tumbled over on

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**Two of Nedra Graybill's favorite ornaments of the hundreds on her trees are bells fashioned from church communion cups and a shiny, hanging pickle, traditional German symbol of good-luck.**



**Three generations cluster around the coffee table in the Graybill home, adding finishing touches before the Airville Holly Tour. From left are Nedra Graybill, granddaughter Natalie Webb, and daughter Mildred Bacon.**