

LIFE IN MINIATURE



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"Anything in real life can be made in miniature. It just takes a little time and patience," says Ginny Newell of Mooresville as she peers through "Something Blue," her rendition of an upscale bridal shop. She is donating her collection of miniature replicas to a new museum in Charleston.

A museum-quality hobby

Dollhouse maker gives creations to S.C. exhibit

MOORESVILLE — Ginny Newell's hobby is about to be immortalized.

The Lake Norman resident is donating the 46 elaborate dollhouses she's made since the 1980s to a Charleston museum.

Visitors to Miniature Memories on Folly Road will eventually be able to tour a "Newell Wing" that will dis-

play her meticulously decorated colonial and Victorian houses, ski lodge, taxidermy shop, Clark Gable home, Long Rifle Saloon, gingerbread house and other works.

Newell's creations will be with those of other notable dollhouse makers in

AROUND THE LAKE



Joe Marusak

a 5,000-square-foot space expected to open in 2008, museum owner Joan Holst said.

In a phone interview this week, Holst praised the attention to detail in Newell's dollhouses and the breadth of her works. Miniature Memories already

displays Newell's quarter-scale Haig Point Lighthouse, based on the real one's blueprints.

Visitors also will see "Dr. Dolly Mender's" house, which Newell made "because I had so many dolls, I had to put them some place."

They'll stop to admire her "Something Blue" house, a
SEE MARUSAK | 2N

Her dollhouses find a home in museum

Marusak *from IN*

bridal shop with blue materials and fixtures.

Visitors might chuckle at her "House of Harry," which she describes as a "pretty snazzy house for a dog." Or her "five-card stud" scene of dogs playing poker.

Newell, 78, who lives off Brawley School and Chuckwood roads in south Iredell, used a kit to make her first house in 1981. The rest she came up with, often in bed at night. Newell drew inspiration for some of her homes from favorite vacation spots, including Nantucket, Mass., and Banff Springs, Alberta, Canada.

Her homes are so detailed she even added miniature roses to the roof of her Nantucket Island-inspired dollhouse, just like real homes have there. She stocked a farmhouse creation with miniature fixtures like the real ones she recalled from growing up in Columbiana, Ohio.

She's made a gypsy caravan, a golf pro shop, a French courtyard scene and a "Bon Appetite" kitchen equipped with miniature copperware friends got her in Europe. The kitchen has a love seat made of fine fabric from London, England.

She's also made figurines, including out of cloth and "Star Wars" action figures whose faces she'd strip and redo.

She surprised her husband of 55 years one Father's Day with an Ohio State Room. Bill Newell Sr., a civil engineer who died in 2005 of prostate cancer, played a position then known as defensive right halfback at Ohio State from 1947 to 1949. "Poppy" Newell, as his family nicknamed him, also played in the 1950 Rose Bowl.

Newell has so many dollhouses still swirling in her mind that "I'll never live long enough to do all my ideas," she said.

Newell, who has three grown children and five grandchildren, creates her works in a room stocked with drills, paints and a toolbox.

Ginny Newell's Dollhouses

■ **What they're made of:** Foam core board, Gatorfoam, plywood.

■ **Time they take to make:** Two or three months.

■ **Estimated worth of each dollhouse:** "\$5,000 to \$10,000 on up," Newell said.

■ **Tallest:** 3 feet. Smallest are her one-foot "room boxes."

■ **Where she's also donated them:** Victory Junction Gang, a camp in Randleman for children with chronic medical conditions and other serious illnesses; St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Catawba County. She made and donated a quarter-inch-scale replica of its historic church building.

■ **Interested in dollhouses?** A miniatures club called Mini Reflections meets at The Depot Fine Arts Gallery, 103 W. Center Ave., downtown Mooresville, 7:30 p.m. the first Wednesday of each month. Details: Rachel Bonney, 704-663-4692.

"Anything in real life can be made in miniature," she said. "It just takes a little time and patience."

She spends many hours researching what she'll include in a home. She even placed a miniature onion in Clark Gable's home - patterned after a home in "Gone With the Wind" - after reading that the actor loved to eat onions. "I love the research," she said.

Making dollhouses also became good therapy for her, she said, during her husband's 10 to 12 years contending with heart ailments.

Although she's donating her collection to the museum, Newell promises to make more. She also has a helper who may carry on the tradition: Sarah Duffy, 23, works on her first dollhouse creation each time she visits her grandmother's home. It's a picnic scene.

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