

Meadow Brook Hall dons holiday dress

SPOTLIGHT

Meadow Brook Hall is a breathtaking place to visit anytime of the year. But during the week of the annual Christmas walk, the hall becomes a child's and adult's fantasyland.

There are special holiday exhibits displayed in many of the 100 rooms in the Avon Township mansion on the grounds of Oakland University for the five days of the Christmas walk.

In contrast to walks of other years, this year's doesn't have a theme. The fresh floral decorations and exhibits of antique toys, miniature villages and handmade creches will simply evolve around Christmas.

"Christmas at Meadow Brook Hall" is scheduled for Wednesday through Sunday, Nov. 29 through Dec. 3, in the hall located on Adams Road, one-third mile south of Walton Boulevard. Hours for the walk are 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. for group tours and 5:30-9 p.m. for general admission on Wednesday and 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on the other days.

Admission prices are \$5 for adults on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and \$6 on Saturday and Sunday. For adults older than 61, students, children under 19 years, and Oakland University affiliates, admission is \$3. There is a group rate for 20 or more persons of \$4 each.

Nothing is left to chance during the days of the walk. The Meadow Brook Hall staff, volunteers and members of the Christmas at Meadow Brook Hall committee have been planning the event for months.

CHAIRPEOPLE MR. and Mrs. F. James McDonald of Bloomfield Hills supervised over the selection of 17 florists who will spend \$500 in fresh materials for the arrangements they'll make for different rooms. The McDonalds helped expand the patrons dinner parties, from two to three to accommodate the increase in attendance. The couple worked with volunteers who will decorate the Carriage House and Knole Cottage on the hall grounds.

The Carriage House will have a candle factory upstairs and food and beverages for sale on the street level. Santa Claus will be visiting with children in Knole Cottage, taking lists of

year-long dreams back with him once the Christmas walks are over.

At a recent preview of the walk, Margaret Twyman of Meadow Brook Hall said last year's event drew 17,000 visitors to the mansion.

Extra patrons' parties and carefully-planned special exhibits are expected to attract even more this Christmas. The Wavel Folk Ensemble will perform and on display will be the Von Oettingen Creche.

THE VON OETTINGEN CRECHE was handmade between 1915 and 1922 by the parents of Elizabeth Von Oettingen, a former librarian at the Detroit Public Library, now living in Grand Rapids.

She remembers her parents working on the explicit figures and recognizes many of the fabrics her mother used in the clothes.

The creche, in addition to the others that will be on display, will fill the ballroom in the lower level and will take four days to set up.

One item of interest that won't take so long to prepare is Santa Claus. Goernsey Jones, who has been Santa for the walks for two years, said he's coming back this year because he loves the children who come to visit him.

Helping Santa will be the Toy Soldier, reindeer, and other figures who will entertain the people waiting in line to get into the hall.

Once inside, visitors will see floral arrangements as exhibits as they walk through the Tudor-style hall built in 1929 at a cost of \$3,500,000. Meadow Brook Hall was the home of Alfred and Malinda Dodge Wilson. Mrs. Wilson was the widow of auto pioneer John Dodge.

Guests will have the pleasure of

knowing that their admission fee for the walk will be used for preservation of the hall, which was given to the State of Michigan. The bulk of the estate, according to the Wilsons' wishes, was used for the founding of Oakland University. Since 1971, Meadow Brook Hall has been used as a cultural and conference center, sharing its contents of original furnishings and art works with the public.

THE FLORISTS who will enhance the already magnificent home for the Christmas walk are: Blossoming Out of Avon Township, Bordine's Better Blooms of Avon Township, Charles Keller Florist, Inc. of Detroit, Dunstan's Flowers of Pontiac, Floral Boutique of Farmington, Flowermill Florist and Gifts of Mt. Clemens, Garton's Florist and Gifts of Sterling Heights, Harmon Flowers of Detroit and Haus of Flowers of Imlay City.

Other floral arrangers are Jacobson's Flowers of Bloomfield Hills, Pontiac and Lake Orion, Jim's Florist of Warren, Jourdan Flowers of Troy, Mr. Florist, Inc. of Troy, Orchid View Florist of Royal Oak, Perkin's Flowers, Inc. of Lapeer, Planterra Greenhouses of Troy and Reid's Flowers and Gifts of Flint.

For those who want to see the hall in a more intimate light, they can attend the patrons dinner parties scheduled for Nov. 30, Dec. 1 and Dec. 2. For \$50 per person, guests will have cocktails 7:30 p.m. and dinner at 8:30 p.m. David Butzu of Detroit, who is 11 years old, will play the piano and organ for the receptions. For reservations, contact the hall at 377-3140. The amount of \$30 of each patron's party ticket is considered a donation and qualifies for Michigan income tax credit.



A mistletoe tree in the great hall has its own toy train for atmosphere.



Andrew Keyes, a representative of the Doll Hospital and Toy Soldier Shop which arranged some of the exhibits, puts heads on toy soldiers for displays.



Elizabeth Von Oettinger tells visitors in a preview of Christmas at Meadow Brook how her parents made the figures in the creche on display this year.



Betty McDonald (left) who with her husband James is chairing the Meadow Brook event, greets Marilyn Stephens and Howie Anderson, both of Bloomfield Hills, at the preview.

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