

Celebrate seasonal activities festively

CELEBRATE THE Holidays," a season of festive activities, demonstrations and displays, as Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village in Dearborn observes holiday traditions spanning three centuries Nov. 29 through Jan. 1 (except Christmas Day).

In Henry Ford Museum, a Christmas tree stretching to the nearly 40-foot ceiling will be decked with assorted toys and stuffed animals and surrounded by scores of bright red poinsettia plants.

Victorian doll houses will be nestled amid softly twinkling Christmas trees. Santa Claus (with his load of peppermint sticks) will be waiting to hear the Christmas wishes of each girl and boy.

Young and old will watch in wonderment as the fantasy toy train, equipped with a tiny camera that broadcasts an engineer's-eye view, travels through a village of gingerbread houses and favorite holiday surprises, including colorful candy and toys.

The homelands of visitors from all over the world will be identified on a world map as each visitor personalizes a link of paper and adds it to a giant paper chain in the museum concourse.

A HEARTWARMING "Visions of Christmas" display will feature a collection of family celebration photos from various time periods. Visitors are

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encouraged to add to the collection by bringing their favorite holiday snapshots.

In adjacent Greenfield Village, visitors can take a merry ride (weather permitting) as selected historic buildings, filled with the smell and warmth of crackling wood fires, welcome them in with the spirit of the holidays.

In the house where Henry Ford was born, visitors can see the Sunday parlor decorated for the season, with greenery lining the mantel and a Christmas tree trimmed with candles, fruit, toys and strings of popcorn. In the kitchen, interpreters will be grinding meat and stuffing it into casings to make links of sausage.

Costumed staff will be busy with holiday cooking in the Edison Homestead, too. Using a wood-burning oven, they'll make tarts, gingerbread,

candies and other seasonal goodies from scratch. Visitors can take copies of the century-old recipes home with them.

Rug hooking, fancy needlework and gift making done in various village homes will reveal how our ancestors combined domestic chores with holiday preparations.

DISPLAYS OF seasonal table settings tell how meal customs have been part of holiday celebrations. And visitors can also see the tradition of tree trimming has changed in appearance over the decades, from a Christmas tree decorated with American flags to another made of feathers.

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For those who want to step back in time and enjoy the magic of Christmas at night, two after-hours programs are offered: "1850s Holiday Evening at Eagle Tavern" and a "Fabulous 40s Holiday Evening."

The village's Eagle Tavern presents a hearty, family-style meal in the manner of the 1850s, complemented by the holiday singing of a troupe of "stranded" traveling musicians and entertainers.

Lovett Hall Ballroom will be the

setting for a 1940s gala event where the Skyliners Orchestra will play favorite tunes of the Big Band era, champagne toasts will accompany an elegant dinner and dancing beneath crystal chandeliers will provide a romantic evening to remember. Advance reservations for both programs are required.

TO TOP off a season of holiday cheer, the Henry Ford Museum Theater will present the 1904 musical version of "The Wizard of Oz."

The two-hour play, written by L. Frank Baum, features familiar songs, dazzling costumes, lavish sets and classic characters whom the audience is invited to meet after each performance. For ticket information and a schedule of matinee performances in December and January, call the Henry Ford Museum Reservation Center, 271-1620.

Holiday gift shopping becomes both easy and fun in museum or village shops. Special items can be found, including historical Santas, wares fashioned by village craftspeople and Christmas decorations reminiscent of holidays long ago.

Decorative accessories, lamps and mirrors from the recently introduced American Life Collection of reproductions can be purchased in the museum store and furniture will be displayed in a nearby gallery.

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