

Shop observes Dollhouse & Miniature Week

All year it's literally a small world for Dorothy Siano, owner of Country Miniatures in Downtown Farmington. From Oct. 15-21 Siano hopes to show that it really is the little things in life that matter.

During that time, miniature enthusiasts across the country will observe National Dollhouse & Miniature Week. This week is sponsored by the Miniatures Industry Association of America.

Country Miniatures in Downtown Farmington's historic Village Mall, is a full service dollhouse and miniature shop. The shop is packed from floor to ceiling with finished and unfinished dollhouses, dollhouse kits, showcases containing thousands of miniatures, and items such as how-to manuals and supplies to help customers create the homes or their dreams.

The store's dollhouse selection in-

cludes traditional English Tudor and Victorian homes, general stores and fire houses. Their sizes range from single rooms to extravagant homes with several stories and special additions.

Categorized by themes such as country, holiday and recreation, the miniature selection is equally diverse. Some of the more unusual miniatures are bags of brand name dog food and well-known household cleaning products.

There are also several up-to-date miniatures such as hot tubs, microwave ovens and computer and computer work stations. And if the shop doesn't carry the desired miniature, Siano will special order the item or make it herself.

"THE OBJECT of this hobby is to mirror real life in miniature — the more the miniature resembles its

life-sized counterpart the better," said Siano. "We still astonish people that there could be a miniature grandfather clock or chair that looks just like theirs at home."

Since opening Country Miniatures four years ago, Siano has been determined to dispel the myth that the miniature and dollhouse hobby is expensive and complicated.

"A lot of customers come into the shop worried that this hobby will be too difficult or too costly for them," said Siano. "We let them know right away that this hobby has no barriers — it can be adopted for any skill level or budget."

To help illustrate her point, Siano has constructed three dollhouses from the same kit. Each house has been finished a different way with the first done the simplest and the third the most detailed. The more work that has been done on the

house, the more costly it is. Depending on how much the customer wants to spend, Siano can design an appropriate dollhouse and miniature package.

As for the interior of the house, most of the miniatures in the shop fall into at least two price categories with a less and more expensive version. The price of the miniatures is determined by several variables including the materials that compose the item as well as where the item was manufactured.

SIANO ALSO helps customers with their assembly and finishing whether they are beginners or veteran collectors.

"Our advertisements claim 'no question is too dumb' and we mean it," said Siano. "When I first became interested in this hobby, I was given a lot of misinformation so I had to teach myself. I learned that this hobby can be as easy or complicated as you want it to be. The one thing it requires is a little imagination."

In addition to helping customers create their own houses, Country Miniatures will also remodel old dollhouses or custom-make a house according to a customer's specifications.

"And one of the best things about this hobby is that it endures. With just one house, someone could be occupied for their entire life by making additions and modifications. The hobby will last as long as you like," she said.

While observing National Dollhouse & Miniature Week, Country Miniatures will host workshops all day on Monday, Oct. 16. For information about the workshops, call Country Miniatures at 477-1760. Country Miniatures' address is

33335 Grand River. The shop is one of the 150 businesses in Downtown Farmington that are part of the Farmington Downtown Development Authority's district.

The Farmington Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is an agency of the City of Farmington charged with the economic health and vitality of the city's downtown area. Its mission is to maintain a vigorous downtown district while retaining a small community atmosphere.

Miniatures on display

A dollhouse that has delighted many Detroit metropolitan area children and adults will be occupied by black cats, ghosts and other Halloween decorations for the annual Wee Bees Miniature Show Friday through Sunday, Oct. 13-15.

The annual showing of works crafted by miniaturists from southeastern Michigan will be at Miniature Makers' Workshop, 4515 N. Woodward, Royal Oak. It is sponsored by the Wee Bees Club, 16 artists who craft home furnishings, silver, rugs, crystalware and accessories, usually on a one-inch-to-the-foot scale.

The show will feature the work of artisan Betty Gleason of Farmington Hills, a Wee Bees member. Also featured will be the Wee Bees dollhouse and its Halloween trimmings. The dollhouse is booked for educational and charitable purposes through 1990 at area libraries and historical museums.

Show admission is \$2, or 50 cents for children 12 and under accompanied by adults. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday and Saturday; noon to 4 p.m. Sunday.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Godfrey Wanek, 100 years old this week, paints three or four hours every day. The oil painting he's working on now is a scene in Osterreicht, Austria, taken from a postcard.

Artist has 100th birthday

GODFREY WANKE, born Oct. 11, 1889 in Vienna, Austria, celebrated his 100th birthday at an after-dinner party last night hosted by his friends and fellow residents in Detroit Baptist Manor.

Wanek is known throughout the complex for "Godfrey's Gallery," a collection of art work — much of it his own — he put together in one wing of Epsilon Building. Godfrey's Gallery continues from the halls right into his own apartment where yet another oil painting is in progress on the easel.

Wanek began painting at 83 for no other reason than to fill in the time after his wife died.

"It was my only outlet. The only thing I could lose myself in," he said. A subsequent stroke didn't stop the creativity. At age 96 he learned how to paint with his left hand and is still taking commissions.

"Most of the commissions come from people who find a picture they like — many times on a post card — and want it enlarged," Wanek said, who perfected his natural talent for painting with classes from Farmington Artists Club instructors in Farm-

ington Hills Senior Adult Center.

He paints three or four hours every day while the light is right, enjoys seeing the finished product, and more than that enjoys making a gift of one of his pieces that he knows is going to be appreciated.

WANKE CAME to the U.S. in 1912 and lived with two aunts in Philadelphia until he was able to make it on his own. Independence came with a job as a tailor with Wanamaker Department Store that paid \$10 a week. "You could buy a meal for 35 cents then and that included soup and pie," he said.

Wages were a bit higher in Detroit so a move was made to work in a tailor shop that catered to the car-

riage trade here called "Elias." Within a very short time he opened up his own business of making tailor-made clothes for women called "Godfrey's" near the Masonic Temple in downtown Detroit.

It was in 1941 that he married Jessie, one of his customers, who worked with him in the business until they closed the shop and retired together to Port Huron. Jessie died a year and a half later.

Wanek lives independently and requires no more help than a cleaning woman who comes in once every two weeks.

Most of his relatives are either in Austria or Canada. He has one Goddaughter, a regular visitor, and a host of friends who drop by.

Knight Music

Bob and Anne Burns take their audience back to medieval times when "A Little Knight Music" is presented at 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 12, in The Community Center. The audience joins in with Renaissance songs about knights, dragons and humble frogs. Tickets are \$4, or \$12 per family, which includes dessert after the performance, available from the center, 477-8404.



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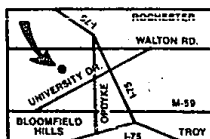


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