

Thinking Small

Museum of Miniatures celebrates craftsmanship on a tiny scale

By Mike Corbett

Photos provided by Museum of Miniatures



When you're a kid, miniatures are second nature. Model cars, trains, dollhouses, action figures all spark our imaginations and help us learn about how the world works. Though we outgrow the toys, a miniature world is still a fascinating thing.

There's an art to creating miniatures, and that art is on display at Carmel's Museum of Miniatures and Other Collections, nestled into a small corner of the Arts and Design District, and one of only five

museums in the nation dedicated exclusively to the art form.

Located in a 125-year-old farmhouse with a recent addition on the front, the museum is a non-profit created when three women combined their collections. Suzie Moffett, Suzanne Landshof and Nancy Lesh had seen other collections disappear when their creators had died or sold their work. They wanted to preserve their treasures in a space open to the public.

The museum opened in 1993 and has been located on the southeast corner



Ceramics stoneware by Jane Graber

of 1st Ave SE and Main St. ever since. Though Lesh has died, Moffett is still active as President of the Board of Directors. Landshof is Treasurer and will retire this year after working at the museum as a volunteer since it opened.

Attention to Detail

Though most of the miniatures are dollhouses, the museum has also featured collections of miniature glassware and crystal, model cars and trucks, dolls and miniature tools. Many



Levi Coffin House with secret hiding space

Photo provided by The Times



1 12 Dancing Princesses detail by Suzie Moffett 2 House by Lucina Ball Moxley 3 Ceramics salt glaze stoneware by Jane Graber 4 Depression glass case 5 Elaine Mancini and Suzanne Landshof 6 Suzie Moffett 7 Dorothy Stickles' Georgian on display 8 Display in Collections room

of the painstakingly crafted objects furnish the dollhouses.

A temporary exhibit on Hoosier History features incredibly detailed miniature artifacts and a model of Levi Coffin's home. Coffin was an abolitionist and conductor on the Underground Railroad who lived in Fountain City, near the Ohio border. The model shows the secret hiding places common in underground railroad homes used to hide slaves on their journey to freedom.



Carmel's Museum of Miniatures and Other Collections

Design District events, cultivating corporate partners and expanding children's programming. "We frequently have three generations in a visiting group," she says. "Miniatures seem to lend themselves to intergenerational learning and sharing."

Expansion is in the works. Mancini plans to hire a Collections Manager in the next few months, she's applying for grants and seeking sponsorships. Attendance was up 18% last year and she has plans to grow it even more. But, of course, no matter how much Carmel's Museum of Miniatures grows, in one regard it will always remain small. Because on the corner of 1st Ave. SE and Main St., it really is a small world, after all. [HCBM](#)



The standard scale for building miniatures is 1 foot = 1 inch, so a six foot tall grandfather clock would be six inches tall in the miniature world. Becoming increasingly popular are 1/2" to 1" scale (making that clock three inches) and 1/4" to 1" scale (making that clock 1 1/2").

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