

# Museum recreates Indiana history in miniature

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Feature Writer

The Indiana Bicentennial display opened at the Museum of Miniature Houses and Other Collections in Carmel Jan. 25. The display was scheduled to end Memorial Day, but the popularity of the exhibit caused the museum docents to extend the end date through Labor Day.

The idea for the display came from Elaine Mancini, executive director of the museum, who was serving on the bicentennial committee for Hamilton County. "We had so many facets of Indiana history at the museum already. We had a typical Indiana farmhouse, a farmers market from the late '50s, Amish buggies and a replica of the Levi Coffin house, all in miniature," said Mancini.

The museum's board members embraced the idea of an Indiana Bicentennial display, loaning personal pieces to the museum for the historical display and commissioning some additional pieces for the Levi Coffin house replica. The Coffin house in Newport, became known as "Grand Central Station" of the Underground Railroad in 1826-1846 as Levi and his wife, Catharine, helped provide safe passage for 1,000



**INDY 500 MARMON WASP** — A detailed replica of the Marmon Wasp, the winning car of the first Indy 500 in 1911. (Photo by Teresa Nicodemus)

runaway slaves, many hid in a secret room in their home. The museum's commissioned replica of the home features the hidden room.

The unique miniature display became an official Bicentennial Legacy Project and continued to expand to a vast three-room exhibit, including another commissioned piece, the Major Taylor bicycle. Born in Indianapolis, Marshall W. "Major" Taylor, was an African-American cyclist who by 1898 had broken seven world track records. This historically accurate miniature of his bicycle was painstakingly handcrafted by John Muse, a museum volunteer, who spent 200 hours recreating the details of the bicycle.

Other Indiana milestones are featured in the display, including replicas of the Indiana-built

Marmon "Wasp" car, which won the inaugural Indy 500 in 1911; a recreational vehicle crafted in honor of Elkhart County's world-wide acclaim as being the recreational vehicle manufacturing capitol of the world; a Hoosier cabinet, named after the Hoosier Manufacturing Company in New Castle; a miniature kitchen vignette featuring detailed depression glass in honor of Indiana's glass industry and many more architecturally scaled models representing Indiana history.

"The defining feature of a true miniature," said Mancini, "is when you see a picture of it, you would swear it's the real thing." The average miniature piece is 1-inch to 1-foot. As an example, she explained, a 6-foot grandfather clock would be scaled to 6 inches as a miniature. "There is something about miniatures that makes history magical. Many people have enjoyed visiting the display. They love the historical aspect and the history of our



**UNIQUE MUSEUM** — Located on the corner of Main Street in Carmel, the Museum of Miniature Hoses and Other Collections is one of five museums in the country that focuses on miniatures. (Photo by Teresa Nicodemus)



**DEPRESSION GLASSWARE** — Shown is a replica of a kitchen vignette displaying depression glassware. (Photo by Teresa Nicodemus)

state. Everyone can appreciate the precision and craftsmanship of making something so intricately detailed on such a small scale," said Mancini.

According to Mancini, many

museums may have miniature displays, but the Museum of Miniature Houses is only one of five museums in the country that fully focuses on miniatures. "It's a cultural jewel," she added.