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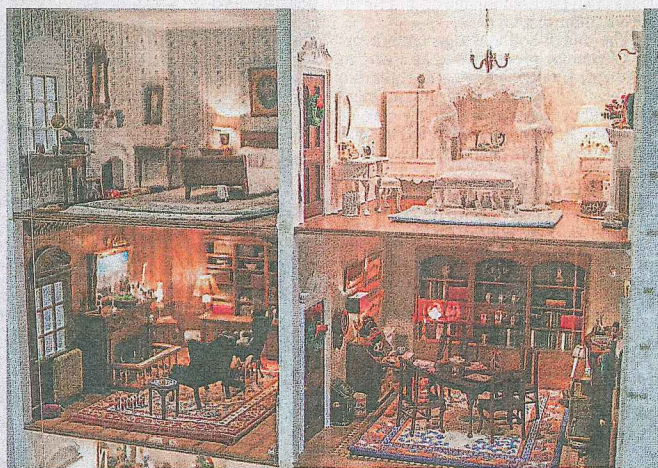
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2016 **1D**

# FAMILY LIFE



Wilson Warner House in Odessa has a English-style dollhouse on display.

SUBMITTED PHOTO



KYLE GRANTHAM/THE NEWS JOURNAL

Nancy McDaniel's dollhouse, a six foot by three foot, slate roofed and fully electrified dollhouse featuring over 700 detailed objects, sits on display at Winterthur on Thursday.



SUCHAT PEDERSON/THE NEWS JOURNAL

A Brandywine Christmas at the Brandywine River Museum of Art runs through Jan. 8.



# The dollhouses of Christmas

A new addition at Winterthur adds to the merriment of miniatures in Delaware holiday attractions

JEN RINI THE NEWS JOURNAL

Nancy B. McDaniel's mini mansion will make you want to build a shrink ray – for yourself.

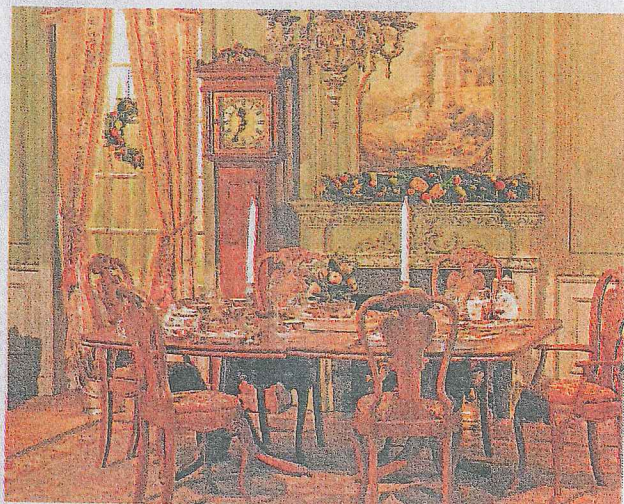
More than 6 feet wide and nearly 4 feet tall, the electrified dollhouse, which is now on display at Winterthur Museum, Gardens and Library through Jan. 8, holds 18 elegantly decorated rooms with about 1,000 miniature objects like a brass birdcage, blue-suited nutcracker soldier and tray of red and white striped candy canes.

It's easy to imagine playing a waltz on the home's red flowered baby grand piano and cook Christmas dinner in the blue and cream-tiled kitchen.

"Every time I look in here, I see something new," said Lynn Weymouth, an interpreter at Winterthur who watches over the dollhouse in the museum's Galleries Stair Hall. The dollhouse is the new exhibit at the museum's annual Yuletide celebration.

McDaniel's dollhouse is one of many miniature displays showcased this holiday in Delaware. Brandywine

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COURTESY OF LONGWOOD GARDENS

The Peirce-du Pont house at Longwood Gardens always has a miniature dining room display on view.



# Dollhouse

Continued from Page 1D

River Museum of Art, Longwood Gardens, Nemours and Historic Houses of Odessa all have a dollhouse or doll furniture in their displays.

The role of dollhouses as both favorite Christmas presents and as a way to celebrate family and home fit right into the braided strands of nostalgia, heritage and history that are at the core of Yuletide, A Brandywine Christmas and the holiday displays at Nemours, Longwood and Odessa.

The late McDaniel, an interior director who admired Winterthur, donated the dollhouse to the museum in 2015, where it quickly became a restoration project and labor of love for museum staff and University of Delaware students.

Karissa Muratore, one of the University of Delaware art conservation students who helped restore the dollhouse, said she felt like she got to know McDaniel during the 10-week project. Muratore and another UD student Amanda Kasman used distilled water and cotton swabs to take off oil and grime and patched objects, wooden floors and walls.

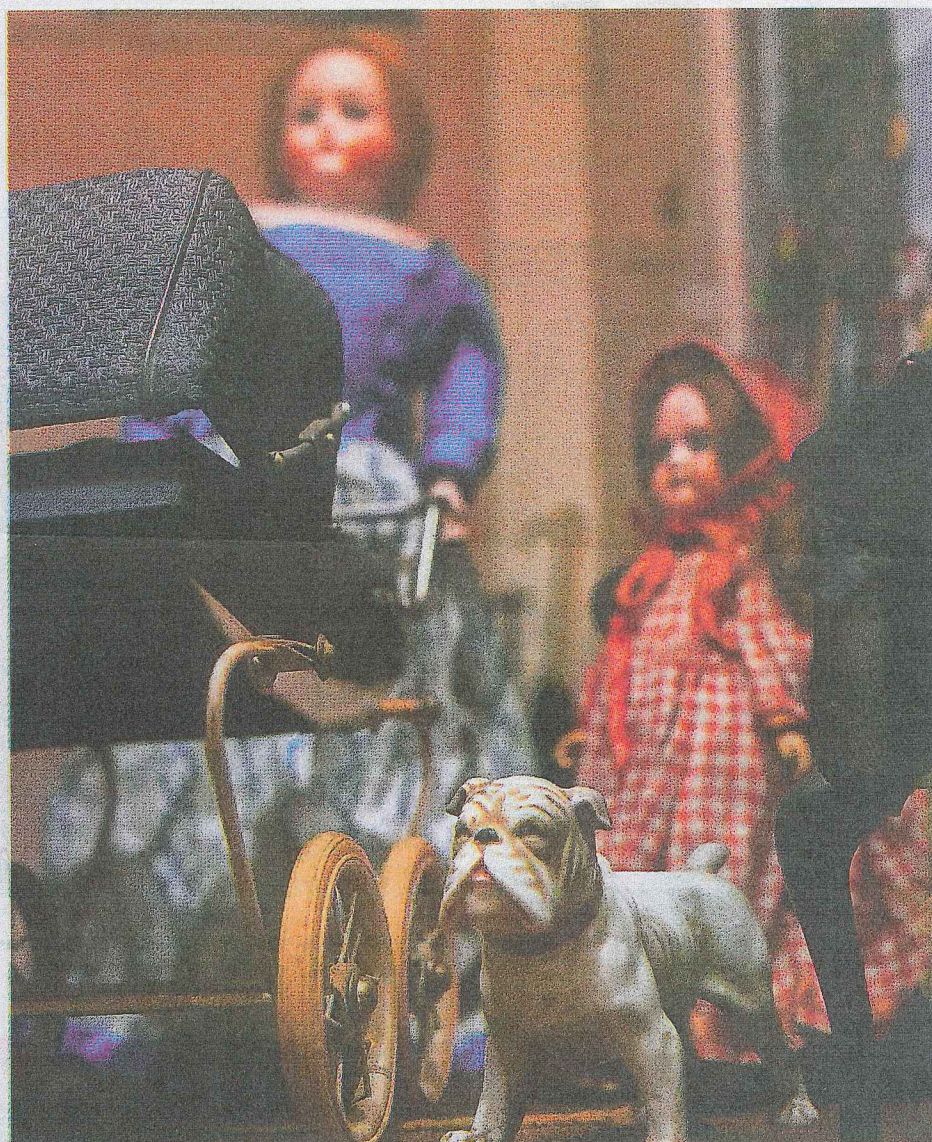
They catalogued about 1,000 items in the process, including a miniature portrait of McDaniel, in a forest green button-up shirt.

"It got to feel very intimate," Muratore said. "We know how much time and energy she put in each time and energy in each room."

Decorating for Christmas became a special treat; the students decorated the home as McDaniel would have decorated her own, large home for the holidays with wreaths on every window and nutcrackers in nearly every room. There were also three trees to dress with silver and white ornaments, teddy bears and needlepoint.

Over at the historic Wilson-Warner House in Odessa, Ann and Horace Hotchkiss donated the Georgian dollhouse, explained curator Brian Miller.

That dollhouse, which has 20 rooms and a grand staircase on the back side, is displayed in the Christmas exhibit which celebrates the 200th anniversary of E. T. A. Hoffmann's Prussian Christmas story "The Nutcracker and The Mouse King" until Dec. 31.



SUCHAT PEDERSON/THE NEWS JOURNAL

A Brandywine Christmas at the Brandywine River Museum of Art runs through Jan. 8.

The miniature home stands about 3 feet tall and is 3 feet wide. It houses furnishings from the 1800s. Though the interior rooms of the dollhouse are not open to the public, the architecture with red brick and yellow window trim is a beautiful addition to the room, Miller said.

At the Brandywine River Museum of Art, Ann Wyeth McCoy's dolls are on display until Jan. 8, along with the dollhouse she received in 1966, 40 years after she received her first doll on her eighth birthday. McCoy and her husband converted a toolshed into a two-story dollhouse with six rooms that you can walk into. The house was on their property in Maine before being installed at the museum after McCoy's death in 2005. The dollhouse quickly became a family affair; McCoy's brother made wooden furniture, McCoy herself made the quirky wallpaper and there are miniature leather-bound books made by Jamie Wyeth. In nearly every room, there is a pet pooch too, since McCoy's family always grew up with dogs.



"It's Ann's passion," said Christine Podmaniczky, curator of N. C. Wyeth Collections and Historic Properties at Brandywine River Museum of Art.

Dollhouses showcase the creator's detail, imagination and provide an escape for the rest of us looking to get lost in the miniatures, which here include a rendering of an Andrew Wyeth painting, a portrait of Ann herself and even a small urn that contains a few of Ann's ashes.

At Nemours, the Versailles-inspired home of Alfred I. du Pont, a child's dollhouse is included in the display through Jan. 8, although no one knows its pedigree, according to a spokesman there. At Longwood Gardens, a miniature dining room set remains on display all year, says a spokeswoman. If you only see a photo of it, it looks like a real room, she points out.

Lauri Jacobs of Wynnewood, Pennsylvania, and Madeleine Antonelli of Ardmore, Pennsylvania, stared intently at McDaniel's dollhouse at Winterthur on a recent Friday.

The pair studied the house's three floors and peered through the windows. Their eyes darted back and forth, honing in on 17 needlepoint rugs McDaniel made by hand, hidden trunks in the attic, real silver napkin rings, a dollhouse (inside the dollhouse) and a "Joy of Cooking" book on the kitchen table.

"It's phenomenal. Such detail," Jacobs said.

McDaniel was inspired to craft and furnish a miniature home after she was inspired by Queen Mary's dollhouse at Windsor Castle during a family trip to England. She spent the next 30 years

perfecting it.

"The rooms are just beautiful, unified, very holistic...and that frees the eye to wander around and see all the unique little treasures throughout the rooms," said Debbie Harper, curator of education at Winterthur.

Harper previously had sought out dollhouses to be part of the Yuletide exhibit, but none said "Winterthur," she felt. McDaniel's house proved to be different. The decor is not tied to a particular style period, but reflects McDaniel's tastes and replicates objects from her own home.

"Had I not known this was a dollhouse, I would have thought I was looking at an exquisitely furnished private house," Harper said.

McDaniel would have found a kindred spirit in Henry Francis du Pont, an avid decorator and the last du Pont to oversee Winterthur before it became open to the public. They both felt that rooms should not necessarily have one focal point, but a theme and fluid, uniform presentation, Harper said.

Harper said both worked for decades on their beloved homes, and each became a point of connection for friends and family. Staff eventually learned there was a special connection between the du Pont family and the dollhouse: there's a painting of Admiral Samuel Francis du Pont circa 1850, Henry's ancestor, in the study.

"It was almost like a totem like it was intended to be here," Harper said. "Like this has come home."

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