



*The Sparkling  
Holiday Tradition of*

# Tiny Town

Nothing says the holidays are here more than twinkling lights and a Christmas village, but Tiny Town in Easley, S.C., takes things to a whole new level. An annual tradition for thousands of people, this free-to-the-public display features building replicas lit up, creating an entire mini-town.

It all began in 1974 when Ollie Jennings realized that she was never going to live in a log cabin like she had dreamed of doing. So instead, she asked her husband Perry to build her a replica of a North Carolina log cabin church that she liked. He acquiesced and from there, things spiraled out of control. They constructed building after building. "Mama could build. If she wanted a building, she would make her a building," says daughter Pat Kelly.

Perry and Ollie decided to add Christmas lights to the buildings in 1977 and each year they would add more buildings and more lights. Word started getting around that it was a fun place to bring the family during the holidays, and the Jennings family was more than happy to open their property to visitors. By the time Ollie passed away in 2009 (Perry had died a few years earlier), the Jennings property had about 80 buildings in all.

Pat continues the tradition today. Because of

deterioration, there are only about 25 buildings now, but there's still plenty to see. Pat isn't quite sure how many lights there are but she says, "We've got enough for me to handle." Preparations begin in September when Pat starts to open the buildings, dust them down and replace anything that might have gotten broken.

Most of the buildings are based on a theme. There's a Playhouse, a McDonald's, a Disney building, a fire station, a snow building (it has snow on the floor) and a nursery. There are two manger scenes, a barnyard, a car lot and even a cross made of brick, lit with red lights and bearing a Jesus statue at the top. Elvis, Shirley Temple, Colonel Sanders and Urkel are part of an extensive collection of dolls and other collectibles.

The Tiny Town experience is still very much a family effort with Pat's brother tending the bonfire every night and her daughter helping serve coffee and greet the guests in the aptly named coffee house building.

Thousands of people come from all over South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia to view the displays. Pat serves free coffee each night (donations are greatly appreciated). Pat still makes it on the wood stove like her mother used to do and then transfers it to a more modern coffee maker to strain it and serve it. Some visitors bring marshmallows to roast over the

bonfire or their own hot chocolate mix; Pat provides cups and hot water.

Pat intends to continue operating Tiny Town for as long as she can. She says it's a lot of hard work but she really enjoys meeting all of the people. It's especially rewarding when people say that it reminds them of Grandma's house or they are bringing their children this year because they grew up visiting Tiny Town. But, she says, "If and when the Lord decides it's my time to go home, then that will probably be it. They (the other family members) don't have it in them like me and Mama to continue Tiny Town."

This holiday season, why not start your own family tradition with a visit to this Southern display? After all, it's not truly Christmas if you haven't been to Tiny Town. ☺

**DETAILS** The lights are on from Thanksgiving until New Year's Eve from 5:30 p.m. until 10 p.m. every night, weather permitting. Admission is free but donations are accepted. Tiny Town is located at 555 Latham Road, Easley, SC 29640. Call Pat Kelly at 864-859-7335 for directions or information.