

Decked out Wysox Home is Yuletide: Landmark

By David Keeler

It's been a Christmas landmark in Wysox for about a half-century. Drive through Wysox on Route 6 during the Christmas season and you can't miss seeing the spectacular Christmas display at the Ennis home.

Cars frequently can be seen parked across the street taking in the impressive display. Many parents bring their kids to see this centerpiece of community Christmas decorations.

And you don't need to be on Route 6 in Wysox to see this brilliant display. If you know which direction to look, it's visible from Tip Top Road in Asylum Township and other area vantage points.

It all began some 50 years ago when the late Jim Ennis and his wife, Dorothy, decorated their house with a few strings of lights, and it's been getting bigger and brighter ever since.

Former Towanda radio personality Jack Baker once joked about how the lights confused pilots trying to land at the Towanda Airport.

Towanda businessman, Barry Aaronson quipped that all that the Ennis's display lacked was a Star of David. That resulted in a six-foot star fashioned from electrical conduit becoming part of the display, which prompted Aaronson to sing a musical voicemail for the Ennis family about how a "beautiful Star of David appeared in the eastern sky over Wysox."

Jim Ennis, Sr.'s son, Tim, who now resides in the house with his family, is keeping his parents' Christmas tradition alive, with lots of help from his family members, including his mom, Dorothy, who's now 88; his sister, Teresa Edsell; his daughters, Emmalynn and Esabella, and Jenny Ennis, Tim's wife.

The family starts unpacking the decorations and lights in early November and begins assembling the displays Thanksgiving night, continuing to add pieces over the next week or so. The display will remain in place until shortly after New Year's Day.

"We had wonderful, warm weather this year," Tim Ennis said, "so it went together relatively quickly. When it's cold your hands get cold and it takes longer.

"This is by far the largest display we've ever had," Tim says, adding that it's likely going to get even larger next year, "just don't tell my wife."

Even though this year's display is the largest, there are still about two dozen previously used pieces that weren't included this year. "We combined items from our house in Monroeton with items in Wysox this year," Tim says. An additional \$900 was spent on new items, which Tim says was the family's first big purchase in a few years.

Trying to put the size of the display into perspective is difficult. For starters, considering that to get electric power to everything requires about 1,800 ft. of extension cords, or just over a third of a mile. Then there are the 27 air-blown inflatables, 281 plastic and fiberglass blow molds of all sizes, plus an impressive collection of Santas, snowmen, gingerbread men, trees, choir members, elves, candles, deer, toy soldiers, lollipops and nativity scenes.

The display includes approximately 9,000 miniature lights, which is actually less than used in previous years. There are plastic totes filled with unused lights from earlier displays that likely number around 10,000.

Several wooden pieces of the display, which don't have their own lights, are illuminated with spotlights. And if some parts of the display look familiar, it's because they've been recycled from other area displays over the years including:

- A display featuring Santa and his reindeer once graced the lawn of a bank in South Williamsport.
- The large green lanterns once were part of Towanda's Main Street decorations when garlands and wreaths spanned both sides of the street.
- The red and white bells at one time adorned the streets of Sayre.

New items this year include some large blow mold soldiers and several other vintage blow molds, which were purchased from collections across New York and PA. Blow molding is a plastic manufacturing

process where a hollow tube is filled with melted plastic, placed into a steel mold, inflated with air, forcing the plastic to the interior surface of a metal mold. The metal mold is opened when cooled and the item is removed and appropriately painted.

Two original pieces added by Tim's mom and dad are still part of the display, including a Poloron Santa and deer, which are on display near the front door. "This year I bought another Poloron Santa in near-new condition," Tim says. "It was quite a score, considering what I paid."

Over its near half-century of existence, the display has increased in size every year, Tim says. "At one point, I was buying direct from Union Products, one of the larger blow mold manufacturers in their day, but unfortunately they closed in 2006. I was paying the same price stores paid, averting the near 100-percent markup stores add to their prices."

Tim considers himself a knowledgeable collector of outdoor Christmas decorations, but even he has his spending limits. "At an auction, I saw a rotating mechanical snowman holding a shovel that sold for \$2,800. Call me cheap if you want to, but I just didn't need a piece of plastic with a motor for that price," he said.

When the Christmas season is over, pieces of the display are wrapped in plastic, re-boxed and kept until the next year in a 12x26 storage shed.