

Hauntsville 2023



Created by:

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A Village Landlord Since
1984

An Introduction
April 17

Inside the Mind of a Village Collector

Here we are, a third of 2023 has come and gone and I can hear my internal Village Clock wildly ticking away. Like the white rabbit in Alice in Wonderland all I can hear is: "I'm late, I'm late, for a very important date. No time to say hello, goodbye, I'm late..." Such are the thoughts that occupy my mind throughout much of the year, every year. Why? I'm a VILLAGE LANDLORD. It is a job I never applied for, it just sort of happened. I entered a Hallmark Card Shop in 1984 and saw a Department 56 piece called the Pumpkin Wagon

and it reminded me of my childhood. I took it home and I was hooked. I have been a Village Landlord ever since. I don't know how I lost control but the little little people have taken over and their demand for a better home have driven me to construct the penultimate village every year. I currently have to look after more than 300 Dicken's Village residents and to further complicate things I also have almost 200 additional villagers who reside in Hauntsville, my annual Halloween Village. The Lord Mayor of London Town (it is an elected position that changes annually currently held by the man known as Lonesome Jack) and Witch Hecate, the generally accepted leader of Hauntsville, have already set forth their demands for their seasonal village displays and their chance to once again stroll their village streets, attend bazzars, visit old friends and in general live their lives. As their landlord I am responsible for bringing form and shape to their villages. These little people currently they occupy my dreams and even my waking hours as they keep telling me what features they want in this year's village. I hear them constantly. I have tried therapy, but it has not worked.

In reality I love building villages. I plan my villages all year and make notes on what features I'll be adding (or subtracting). I learned long ago that bigger is not better and I never plan on displaying every building every year. Each village starts with my vision of just what will be the feature attraction in the village for this year. It may be a particular building, perhaps a village activity such as a dinner at the castle or a town square celebration. maybe it will be a the opening of a new park, a street, or a country lane. One year dragons took up residence in Hauntsville and once ghost took over the lighthouse. I never know, it just comes to me and the adventure

begins. Once I establish what the village story will center around then I can start the actual village planning. For me I do not just set up little lit houses, each building will be displayed in its own setting and it will tell its own part of the story. It is like I'm landscaping a display for each village resident to call home. I can tell you now that Hauntsville 2023 will be built around a forest glen where Hecate and her sister witches will cast their spells and fly on their brooms. I've heard from Crookshanks, one of their cats, that a special brew is being prepared for sale at the pub and I've been invited to share a pint and perhaps get a lesson on a broom flying as well. So now you know the theme for Hauntsville this year. Over the next few months I'll be sharing some of the plans and my progress as I attempt bring the village to life so please drop by to see the progress. I've only got 167 days to get it all together.

This year will bring a new challenge to my village construction. I live in south Florida, USA but my display will come to life in Fayetteville, North Carolina about 800 miles away. So I will have the added challenge transporting everything to a new location in addition to daunting task of just getting the village built. I hope to cut and shape the pieces in Florida, then pack them for transport and finally assembly them in Fayetteville. Stay tuned, this should be an interesting adventure.

Each village needs an entrance. A place, if you will, to begin the adventure of strolling through the village, visiting all the residents and seeing what they have been up to during the current year. The entrance to Hauntsville this year is going to be when you take your life into your hands and cross over the old covered bridge (likely

guarded by trolls) and then following the trail to the magic spring inside Split Rock Mountain and finally entering the Glen of Witches. I've started construction by building the covered bridge. Below you can catch a preview of the bridge. Mistress Hecate and her companion cats (that is Crookshanks on the left, and Midnight on the right) can be seen inspecting the bridge. They are not quite ready for you to enter the village, so please obey the sign. Until next time, watch out for any ghosts making their way through the fog between Florida and Fayetteville.



The

"Covered Bridge" shown here is made using the Field Stone Footbridge part of the Department 56 Village Accessories collection. The Covered portion of the bridge is made from balsa wood pieces cut and glued together and then wood stained to

match the tones of the bridge. I used some Woodland Scenics Fine Turf called Burnt Grass T1344 to add a “mossy” feel to the roof of the bridge. I love this stuff along with the rest of the Woodland Scenics building materials. I was satisfied with the bridge but after looking at this picture I think I’m going to add some “moss” to the large side boards just below the roof. I made the bridge cover so that it can be just lifted off and thus I have not damaged the original D56 Accessory. The reason I chose to use the D56 bridge as the base was because it had those 8 lamps to add light to the scene. Lighting is always my biggest problem and I spend lots of time hiding extra lights to create the mood I’m looking for. More on this in future editions. Below is a separate picture of the Cover portion of the bridge as it stands alone.



If you have questions, feel free to drop me a note at:

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Until next time...