

September 30, 2008

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“A Little Bit of Americana” is on display at the Heritage Museum and Visitors Center in Burleson.

Thanks to the skills of Phil Marsh, the Burleson Heritage Foundation (BHF) has a display of models of buildings. The artistic work of Marsh is contained in a case under the front window of the former Interurban building at the corner of Wilson and Ellison streets in Old Town Burleson.

Marsh stopped by the Heritage Museum and Visitors Center in August and mentioned to volunteer Carolyn Kerr that he made models of buildings from scratch. Kerr convinced Marsh to bring four of his models to a BHF board meeting, at which time the board approved adding the models to the museum’s offerings. The buildings have been on display since mid-September. They will remain at the center until the end of October.

“The first three I did were from kits, but I learned how they were made so the rest of them are built from scratch,” Marsh said of his models.

He has 16 models, including a feed mill, grain mill, gas station, farmhouse, used car lot, brewery, wire manufacturing building, rail service building, and a small neighborhood, all of which are period pieces that date from the 1930s to the 1950s. Marsh includes decals of actual ads that were published in that time period with his models. The tools of his trade include jewelers’ tools, paper, cardboard, wood, glue, plaster of Paris, surgical gauze, fiber optics, and, real dirt and special bushes to create the landscaping.

“When we go on vacation, I always pick up bags of dirt to see how they will work. The best dirt comes from the Rio Grande Valley because there is no silica in it, so when the model is photographed, it doesn’t produce a glare,” Marsh said.

Marsh moved back to Burleson in 2006. He was the first manager of Bealls department store (1987-1989) in Burleson, before he was transferred to east Texas. Marsh’s love for creating model buildings actually began with model trains when he was seven or eight years old. He picked up the hobby again when his doctor ordered him to find a hobby after Marsh suffered a heart attack.

A model can take between 150 and 300 hours to complete. Marsh works from photographs of actual buildings. The dimensions can be determined by measuring the sizes of the doors and windows.

Kerr convinced Marsh to make a model of Burleson's old train station that was torn down years ago.

"We have pictures of the original station, so he said he would construct a model and donate it to the Burleson Heritage Foundation and Heritage Museum and Visitors Center," Kerr said.

Marsh said the donated model will be a clapboard wood building, a typical station used by the Texas Electric Railway.

The model buildings will be one of the Heritage Museum and Visitors Center's highlights during the Founders Day celebration on Saturday, Oct. 11, in Old Town. The celebration takes place between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m.

For more information about this release, call the public information office at 817-447-5400, ext. 286.