

Iconic Model Train Exhibit Will Light Up the Holidays

AT THE ATWOOD

By Tim Weller

Ryder Martin just might be Chatham's oldest kid.

The retired school teacher is passionate about model trains, which is great news for train enthusiasts of all ages.

After a three-year absence, Ryder's *Holiday Train Wonderland* will be up and running at the Atwood House & Museum throughout the holiday season.

"It's a forever thing, I guess," Ryder says about his lifelong hobby. When he was 9 years old, his parents let him move his bedroom furniture to one side of the room so he could set up his own train display on the other.

"That's how it got started."

How passionate is he about model railroading? Well, when he and his wife, Margaret, moved to Chatham, he set up a model outdoor railroad in their backyard. "We ran that for a number of years, but finally the vegetation became too much to fight and we had to give it up," Ryder says.

The 14-foot-by-15-foot display includes multiple trains and trolleys rolling through – and across -- various buildings and bridges. The display's centerpiece is a giant castle, and there is also a replica of the 1867 Chatham train station, which is still located on Depot Road.

Various members of the community – including some museum volunteers – have built miniature houses and businesses which appear in the display. "Different buildings may appear or disappear, but things mostly will stay the same," Ryder says.

The display also blurs time periods; you will see everything from the medieval to the Victorian.

Ryder and Margaret will spend most of November moving boxes housing the display from their home to the museum. "There are a lot of trips back and forth," Margaret says. Adds Ryder, "It's a challenge to set up because you have to work from the center out. But we will include whatever the room will bear."

The display will take up the museum's entire main exhibit space.

Although Ryder gets the most recognition for the display, he fully credits Margaret, who recently retired as the museum's administrator.

"If it weren't for Margaret being here, and for being so involved, this display would not exist," he says. "It's as simple as that."

The museum, at 347 Stage Harbor Road, is open year round. Exhibits, including the *Holiday Train Wonderland*, will be open to the public from 1-4 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, starting Dec.7 and running through Dec. 29.

Tim Weller is a member of the Chatham Historical Society/Atwood House & Museum Board of Trustees.