

Enter the Doll House

A place where faces never frown
and wrinkles can't grow

By Ed Conley,
Staff Writer

For ten years, Margaret Mills Armbruster, 88, has been introducing children and adults from all parts of the country to dolls in her Doll Museum in Blackstone.

Because she can't turn away a homeless doll, her collection, now 50-years-old, has packed a century of memories into the two-story house on Church Street.

Memories—that's what dolls are to people who are too old to play with them—memories of childhood. Adults who tour the museum find that the love Mrs. Armbruster has for her dolls, and the stories she dresses them in, reconnect them with their childhood and the innocence that time has stolen away.

"I remember playing with a doll like that," a woman says—and the forgotten little girl, still full of possibilities, stirs inside.

"And I remember playing with a toy train like that," says her husband, surprised that the Doll

Museum has memories for him, too.

Mrs. Armbruster, despite failing health, continues to answer every call for a tour. About twice a week in the warm months, she takes groups of 20-30 among the dolls and their stories. You can often find her sitting on the porch in case passersby stop—per chance to catch a glimpse of something they have forgotten and don't know where to look. And each time she shows her dolls, her love is the same.

Like a caretaker of eternal youth, she opens the door to these seekers of what-they-have-forgotten. An adventure begins.

Who knows where the doll is that will awaken their memories? Who knows what still face will unlock the door to that little girl's first stirring of love?

But Mrs. Armbruster knows she is not the caretaker, for when she is gone, there will still be the dolls.



Never Gets Old

Margaret Armbruster keeps her 4,000 dolls happy by giving them attention. The doll shown here has three faces, one sleeping, one crying, and one smiling.