

# BACKYARD CITY

**M**ORE than 60,000 persons, in the past three years, have visited Chesterton, Ind., (pop. 2,231), to look at William Murray's backyard. It is the site of Littleville, the most elaborate one-man, midget city in America. Built to Lilliputian scale, there are hotels, hospitals, homes, churches, factories, theaters, restaurants, garages—125 realistic buildings arranged to form a model community.

Littleville started as a single bird house in 1932. Murray, who works in a steel mill near Gary, constructed the house in his basement workshop. As he was preparing to place it on a pole, he was struck by the realistic appearance of the little house as it rested on the lawn. So, Murray anchored it in place and began to surround it with other model buildings turned out during his leisure time. Simple houses came first, then a stone mill, then a church which required 308 hours to complete. Before long, Murray was making regular trips to Valparaiso to bring home loads of orange crates and apple boxes as a supply of raw material.

By 1938, the project had assumed such proportions that people for miles around were bringing visitors to see the midget city. A local newspaper ran a feature article on "The Fastest Growing City in America." In that year, 1938, Murray

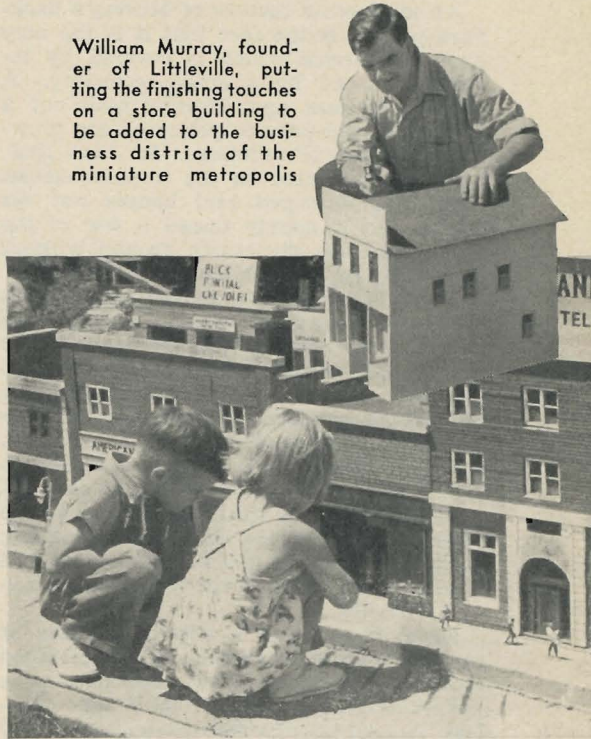
Billboards attract thousands of visitors annually



opened his back yard to the public, charging a five-cent admission fee. He was amazed when, during the first year, 20,000 visitors flocked to Littleville. In 1939, 33,000 came, and, during the past summer, cars from a dozen different states often lined the street on which he lives. You can find in the Littleville Register the names of visitors from Canada, Australia, Japan, and Europe, as well as from every state in the Union.

As these visitors have wandered along the narrow streets of Littleville, they have seen everything from a haunted house—where the cobwebs produced by lawn spiders are

William Murray, founder of Littleville, putting the finishing touches on a store building to be added to the business district of the miniature metropolis



Young visitors examine some of the 125 buildings

A modern Gulliver bestrides the old mill stream





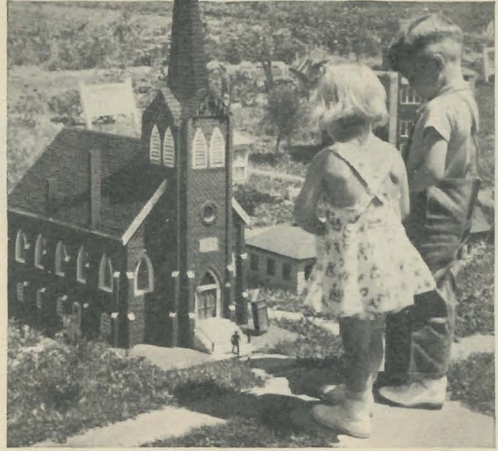
never removed—to a jail and a courthouse, a country club and a waterfront. There is an airport with hangars and planes. There is a "Littleville Post Office" where visitors can mail letters and post cards which are stamped with the name of the miniature city. There is even a "Littleville News," a twelve-page, pintsized paper that carries both advertising and news stories.

In 1939 a railroad, 75 feet long, which actually is operated, was built in the town. Among the additions last year were a school, an oil station, a power house, an airport, and several new houses.

An interesting feature of Murray's backyard project is the fact that it is the only city in America which is covered by insurance issued by a single company. A couple of years ago, Murray took out a \$2,000 fire-and-tornado policy on his growing collection of buildings. In June 1939, he nearly collected on the tornado clause. A twister damaged real houses not far away. But it merely tossed a few of the light Littleville structures around without doing any appreciable damage.

Recently, by means of phonograph records and a loudspeaker system, Murray has added sound effects. Visitors hear chimes and hymns, as they pass by churches, and orchestra and dance music when they near hotels and restaurants. The latest development is an eight-foot-high castle of stone. It weighs more than two tons and stands on a little rise on the outskirts of the city. At present, Murray is spending his spare time working on something he has been planning for a long time. It is a complete steel mill which will be added to the industrial section of Littleville.

Even in so small a city, a problem of sanitation arose, and Littleville has installed a sewage-treatment plant, operated on a non-bacterial principle and said to be odorless. Among the new features which Murray intends to add during the coming year are a drinking fountain and rest rooms.



Recorded chimes sound from the church steeples



Off the waterfront, a liner lies at anchor. Visitors mail cards at the post office. Below, Murray builds an eight-foot castle

A lawn mower makes short work of park maintenance

