



HISTORIC  
**ST. MARYS**  
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COVERING THE LOWCOUNTRY FROM SAVANNAH TO NORTHEAST FLORIDA

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ST. MARYS' PATRIOT WAR

# The Reason for the Season

Showcased by Nativity Collection

Wendy Haymans has a mission—to perpetuate the legacy of her mother, Sharon Bowen, and to remind people what Christmas is really all about.

Through her collection of more than 500 Nativities from around the world, Haymans hopes to inspire in others the desire to embrace the Christmas spirit through the story of the birth of Jesus.

Haymans' and her mother began the collection in 2014, and her first St. Marys public display of the Nativity collection was at the St. Marys Presbyterian Church. Sadly Mrs. Bowen passed away this past year, but the Nativity tradition and ministry still lives on through two generations as daughter Ashley has joined the ministry. Not only is the ministry continuing, but the

*continued...*



Turkey

Tradition woven Turkish carpet on wooden loom  
Istanbul, Turkey



Alaska



Peru

Shipibo family



*L-R: Sharon, Ashley, and Wendy*

## *The Reason for the Season*

collection is expanding as well with Haymans still acquiring beautifully crafted Nativities from all corners of the globe.

Each country's Nativity represents the culture of the country and is crafted from materials that depict the country's resources and/or current story. For example, Liberia's Nativity is fashioned from AK-47 bullet casings telling the story of their tragic civil war.

From Honduras came a Nativity built from snack bags. And the smallest piece in the collection is from Italy—the scene depicted by coffee beans was built using microscopic tools. Materials used by other countries include tree bark, corn husks, driftwood, and paper. The largest in the collection is three feet tall.

"Almost every country is represented," said Haymans. "The scenes themselves vary as much as the materials used to create them."

She went on to explain the differences in the gifts brought to the baby Jesus and the animals in attendance.

"One country included an armadillo, and hogs were used instead of cows, lambs, and donkeys by other countries," she said.

"The Nativities are like my children," Haymans continued. "I feel what the people have gone through and see how they tell their story through the materials and design."

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## *The Reason for the Season*

The ministry's first Nativity display took place in Hampton, Georgia, where Haymans resides and practices as a nurse. Ashley lives in St. Marys and works in the marine mammal program on the submarine base. The founding mom was a St. Marys resident and wanted to make sure St. Marys was included. And now the Nativity display comes to St. Marys every other year, every time the Christmas Tour of Homes occurs.

The event is open and free to the public, though the ministry does accept donations that will help to keep the program going and to expand the ministry.

The 2023 event was dedicated to the memory of Sharon Bowen. Residents and visitors will have to wait until 2025 to, once again, welcome the "Nativities from Around the World," and to experience the stories of the birth of Jesus as told by countries near and far.

*Editors Note: For more information visit the "Nativities from Around the World" Facebook page. ■*