

# Downtown Dudley decks the halls and dolls up for the holidays

By Amy Hotz  
Staff Writer  
amy.hotz@starnewsonline.com

Christmas always has been a special time of year for the Pickett family. So much so that they even kept the holiday in mind when renovating their new home, the Governor Dudley Mansion.

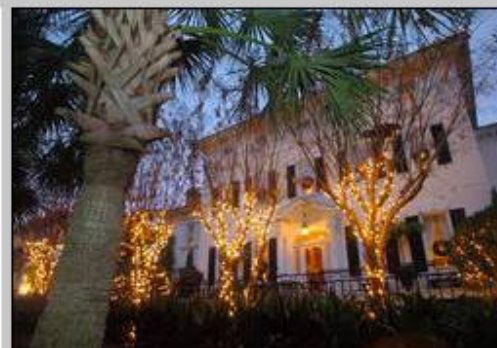


[Enlarge](#) | [Order reprint](#)  
The main Christmas tree in the Dudley Mansion is 10-feet tall and displays some of the more than 1,200 ornaments given to the Picketts by friends and family. The Picketts' collection of ornaments has become so substantial that their son Marshall now has his own tree.  
Staff photo by Paul Stephen

While repairing plaster and painting walls, Ron Pickett installed several heavy-duty outlets outside to power the 5,000-plus lights that adorn dozens of crape myrtles. He also reserved a nook by the stairway for his wife's impressive caroler collection. The foot-tall Dickens carolers come with cottages that have lights in the windows. It took electricians two days to install outlets on a ledge just for the collection.

Several years ago, in Maryland, the family started a tradition of having friends and family bring one Christmas ornament to the holiday party. Over the years, that's added up to about 1,200 tree decorations – each one with a special story behind it. The Picketts also buy an annual, official White House Christmas ornament for their three children. This collection has become so extensive, their son Marshall, 20, has his own tree to display the intricate ornaments. That brings the number of trees in the home to three.

The private residence is not usually open to the public, but this Christmas marks a very special opportunity for 200 guests to enjoy the historic home in its holiday splendor. On Saturday evening, the Picketts will host a black tie-optional Christmas party to benefit the Historic Wilmington Foundation. Tickets (\$100 each) are limited. Stroll through the home, elegantly decorated for Christmas, enjoy hors d'oeuvres, an open bar and a champagne toast. Details: 762-2511. Call today; the Foundation is not open on Saturdays.



[Enlarge](#)

Extra outdoor outlets were installed during the renovation of the Dudley Mansion to power the more than 5,000 lights that decorate dozens of trees.  
Staff Photo | Paul Stephen

## HISTORY LESSON

The Dudley Mansion, built about 1825, was named for its first owner, Edward Dudley, the first North Carolina governor to be elected by popular vote. It was also owned by Pembroke Jones (until he moved permanently to his summer home, Airlie) and James Sprunt. Guests have included politician Daniel Webster, president Woodrow Wilson, secretary of state William Jennings Bryan, secretary of treasury William McAdoo, president William Howard Taft and William Tecumseh Sherman.

## Local Headlines

- [2 boys killed in Leland-area blaze](#)
- [More road widening planned on Independence for spring](#)
- [Officials: New lease terms strengthen ties between NHRMC, Pender Memorial](#)
- [Economy is key for Wrightsville's Whalen](#)
- [Macon hopes to unify Carolina Beach under several distinct goals](#)

## AP Headlines

[N.J. Senate to Weigh Death Penalty](#)