

Before I kick things off I'd like to give a special thanks to Bill and Kathy for giving me this opportunity to share a few things that I have learned about villaging over the years. I would also like thank them for their time, patience and continued effort in making *The Village Collector* a fun and interesting place to visit. And now SECURE!

I would also like to tip my cap to the great cast of folks who also take the time to make this the best web site about Villaging on the Internet. I hope that the things I write about will be just as helpful and interesting to you.

So here we go.

Let me start with a quick introduction so you can get to know me a little better. My name is Mark Frendo, I moved from the Island of Malta to the United States in 1988 with my wife, Mary. Fast forward thirty five years and we have two grown children, two dogs, a new home in the Pocono's and a Christmas Village that we both love dearly.

I have been a Department 56 collector since 1992, specifically the *Christmas in the City* series. Every year, together with my wife Mary, we put together a little village that we like to call Frendoville ... well, maybe not so little.

I remember when I first started collecting there was no You Tube, or for that matter, internet. The only village displays to be seen were those hosted by the big department stores like, Bloomingdales, Macy's or Fortunoff. I was in awe of those displays at the time, and never in my wildest dreams thought that I could put together a display that could come close to looking as good, yet here we are.

I will not be writing about my village specifically, because if I did, (and as all villagers know), we love to talk about our villages and I could go on writing for a very long time probably boring half of you along the way. Instead I would like to share with you some tips and how too's of the things that I do and use in the set up of my village.

# A Simple cover

Today I'm going to show you how to make a simple cover for houses that have a light hole in the back of them.

For those of you who don't know, up until the mid nineties all Department 56 houses made for all villages had a light hole in the back of the house and not underneath, as many, if not all do today.

I just want to point out that I am not familiar with Lemax or other non Department 56 buildings. I have nothing against them, it's just that my collection is exclusively Dept 56.

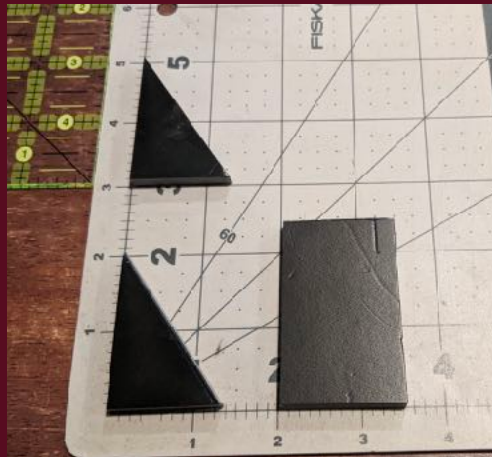


Just a quick backstory. This year we decided to create a full blown backyard scene in our village. When we finally picked out the houses that we wanted to use we noticed that four of the houses had the light hole in the back.

As those of you who own this particular type of house know, because of the protruding clips and wire, we are very limited in its placement. These houses usually end up in the back row or you have to hide this ugly feature with an accessory like a tree or a bush.

We realized two things when setting up the backyards. 1. The more trees or bushes you use, the less real estate you have to set up vignettes. 2. Trees hide a lot when looking down from directly above, and you can still see the light clips if you look close enough.

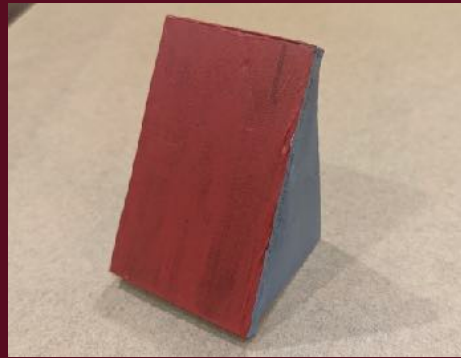
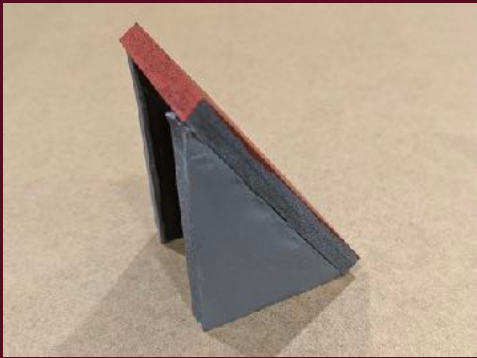
We came up with what we call a cellar cover.



With three small pieces of foam core or heavy project paper you can make a cover that resembles a basement flap door. Unfortunately, as with many village houses it's very rare that one size fits all. The height of the light hole differs from house to house. Covers for a Dickens house may need to be made a little smaller, and for a Snow Village piece, a little larger. Make sure to measure the height of the light hole and add a quarter of an inch, (6mm).

The diameter of the light hole including the protruding light clips, (which differ in size) is about 1 1/2 inches (38mm).

Just glue the pieces together, paint, and you get a simple cover



Here's a look at two of them set up and one light hole exposed.

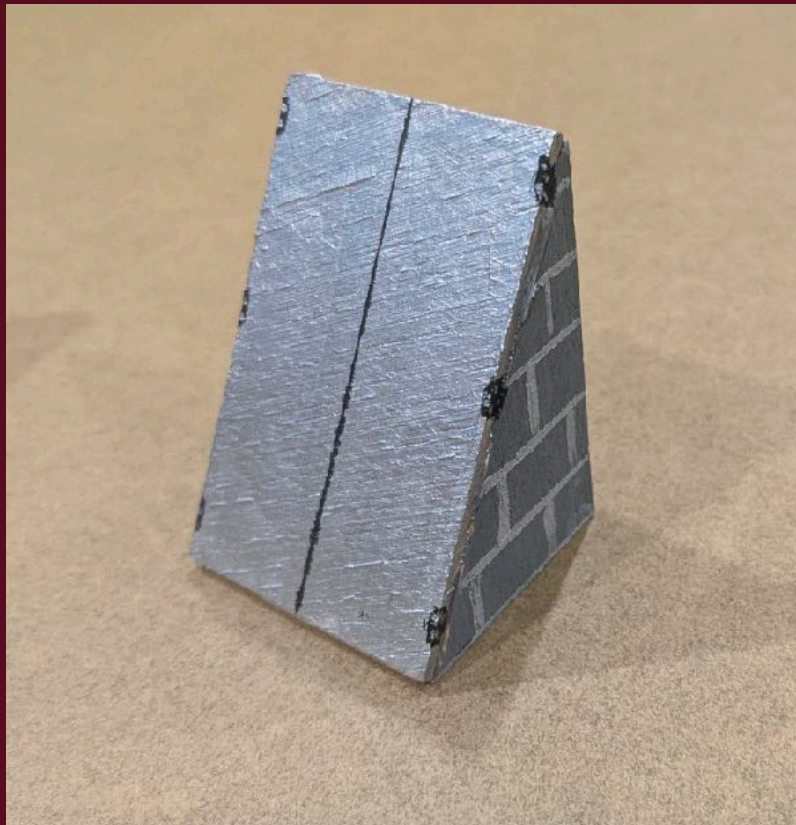




These covers are easy to make, you could make them with your kids or Grand kids as a village project if they want to join in.

I know that a lot of villagers, no matter how hidden or buried their creations are, like to take the time to finish their projects to a more professional level.

I'm no artist but here's a look at a cover that I made from balsa wood.



These are some pictures that were taken of the backyard scene taken last year. The covers blended in nicely doing an awesome job of masking any protruding lights or wires.



Let me know if this has been useful to you, and for those of you who have any questions about my village, feel free to ask.

Next time I'll write about my styrofoam sidewalks and how I hide my wires.

Until then  
Happy Villaging

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