

Jamestown Loves Lucy

by Laurie Mercer

Sporting perfectly coiffed red hair and a 1950s-style swing skirt, Lucille Ball look-alike Diane Vincent mimes the iconic character she portrays.

“I don’t become Lucy until I’ve got my Max Factor lipstick on,” says Vincent, 47, of Los Angeles, while

As the hometown of the late Lucille Ball, Jamestown (pop. 31,730) celebrates the life and humor of the actress. The town is dedicated to preserving the legacy of the town’s most famous resident.

Ball, who co-starred as ditzy housewife Lucy Ricardo alongside her on- and off-screen husband, Cuban- American Desi Arnaz, in their TV house on Eighth Street, now Lucy Lane, in nearby Celoron (pop. 1,295), until she left to pursue an acting career.

Known to generations simply as “Lucy,” Ball created one of the most beloved TV characters of the 20th century. “How do fans would be loving her 56 years after the original I Love Lucy?” asks Ric Wyman, 38, director of the Lucy Festival.

Housed in several renovated buildings in downtown Jamestown, the center consists of The Lucy-Desi Museum; a gift shop offering original Lucy portraits, T-shirts and souvenirs; and the Desilu Playhouse, which was once a nightclub, with full-size soundstage replicas.

“I can still see my grandmother on the couch watching Lucy,” says one visitor dreamily as she gazes at a display of

For the last 11 years, Jamestown has welcomed thousands of fans from across the world to the Lucy-Desi Festival to observe the 96th anniversary of her birth.

During both festivals, Lucy impersonators roam the streets and pose for photographs, and special guests include film editors of her various TV series discuss her work, and buses take visitors on tours of various Lucy-related sites. The comedienne’s ashes are interred alongside her parents.

Jamestown Mayor Sam Teresi, 47, thinks Lucy’s enduring popularity has a simple explanation: “Lucy always had a fan base.”

Lucy look-alike Vincent agrees. “Her fan base, my goodness, it just grows every year,” she says. “Because she was so funny and so