

TORONTO



'Filmport is for bigger productions than series. I wish them luck.' — *Laura Harbin*, Shaftesbury Films

Mystery surrounds '100% genuine' Casa Loma antiques

BY ALLISON HANES

Several times a year, Joan Crosbie, the curator of Casa Loma, is contacted by people who believe they possess artifacts --from pool tables to paintings -- that once graced the home of flamboyant early 20th-century financier Sir Henry Pellatt.

Some of these queries result in prized objects being returned to Toronto's castle, while others prove purely apocryphal.

The latest call came from a Niagara-on-the-Lake antique dealer who has been retained to auction off a number of

remarkable indoor and outdoor light fixtures, some with ornate dragons, which the owner contends came from Casa Loma.

But even as Leon Perel of Forum Galleries offers potential buyers a chance to "own a piece of history" at a Sept. 7 auction on his Web site, Ms. Crosbie has been unable to authenticate the lampposts and carriage house lights as having come from Sir Henry's castle.

"If someone could furnish me with evidence other than word of mouth I would be thrilled," she said. "I would love them to be from here.

I'd love us to be able to say, 'Yes, here's a photograph of them' or, 'Here's proof of them having been sold.' Because at least we could approach the dealer now and possibly purchase them. We're always interested in reacquiring original items." Is it a case of mistaken belief or an enduring mystery?

Mr. Perel described how he was beckoned to a self-storage unit in St. Catharines by his client to examine wrought-iron indoor and outdoor lamps she had recently inherited from relatives. "I spend a good deal of

my time finding out what is the truth," Mr. Perel said.

Ms. Crosbie has scoured records of two auctions of Casa Loma's treasures that took place in 1924 and 1929 as Sir Henry faced down financial ruin, but cannot find any reference to the purported purchaser, nor any mention of the items in the catalogue listing the sale's inventory.

She has also examined photographs of Casa Loma from the museum's collection and the Toronto Archives dating from the period of its completion in 1914 without turning up any

clues. This is not the first time she has been asked to validate these particular items. She was approached directly about buying them over a year ago and could not authenticate them then either.

Mr. Perel believes the seller, who wishes to remain anonymous, will in the coming days be able to furnish proof that the light fixtures were purchased at one of the auctions in the 1920s. "We will have confirmation tomorrow actually or a day after tomorrow, because the lady spends part of her time in the States and she's going

to send the document when she gets back to the States," Mr. Perel said.

In the meantime, he continues to promote the auction of the pairs of lamps -- which he values at up to \$5,000 and \$7,000 apiece -- on his Web site as "100% genuine."

"We keep advertising it as it is because I'm convinced," Mr. Perel said yesterday. "We have the pieces here. I can see how they are and I have difficulty believing that anyone would make something like that for a place other than [Casa Loma.] These are custom-made for a purpose."

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