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Antique dealer collecting since 10 years old

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This stuff's like family

Waiting for an old friend

BURGESSVILLE — There's a catch in Marjorie Larmon's voice when she recalls the day the movers came to pack up her collection of folk art.

And in the two months since her collection of early Canadian folk art was shipped to Toronto to be photographed and catalogued, Mrs. Larmon has spent many anxious days glancing at the empty spaces her pieces occupied.

But soon Mrs. Larmon's separation from her well-loved works of art will be over.

Beginning June 20, A Celebration - 40 works of Mrs. Larmon's folk art of the 19th and 20th centuries in Canada - will be on view at the Art Gallery of Windsor.

And Mrs. Larmon, who has been collecting folk art longer than she cares to remember ("since the day I arrived on this great, good earth"), says she can barely wait another day for the opening.

"It will be great to put it (the collection) out there. It's great for the collectors."

Mrs. Larmon is not the only one looking forward to the show.

DEFINITIVE SHOW

To some people this will be the definitive show of Canadian folk art.

But nobody knows for sure.

Until this spring only a few close friends had seen Mrs. Larmon's collection, and it had never been catalogued or photographed.

What makes Mrs. Larmon's collection so important is that folk art is something which until recently was unheard of by most Canadian collectors.

In fact, when Mrs. Larmon began collecting her works of art no one had yet categorized it as folk art.

"I don't know anything about art," she protests.

THINGS OF BEAUTY

"I just collected them because they were things of beauty."

But what Mrs. Larmon puts down to "a talent for finding things," Windsor Gallery curator Ted Fraser describes enthusiastically as "the remarkable connoisseurship of Larmon... Because of Larmon's knowledge and discerning eye, her collection today is of extraordinary quality and preserves a portion of our past."

Mrs. Larmon, who was born in the Burgessville farm house where she now lives with her husband, says she owes her collection to "the inquisitive and resourceful nature of my Pennsylvania Dutch father who encouraged collecting."

She also attributes her eye for folk art to the simple upbringing by her Quaker mother.

FIRST PIECES

Some of the first pieces in Mrs. Larmon's collection were bought or found by her when she was in her early teens.

Many of the forty pieces were made in Oxford County and surrounding areas.

The exhibit includes a hand appliqued quilt made Mrs. Larmon's great-grandmother.

The pieces are in various media - textiles, wood, metals and pottery - and were used for both decorative and functional purposes.

For instance, there's a owl carved of wood which was used to scare crows from a farmer's field.

There's also a cigar store Indian which Mrs. Larmon bought 25 years ago from the Ward Tobacco Factory in London. The Indian was carved by Jean Cote, a 19th century Quebecois sculptor.

PIRATE VANES

Other pieces include French Canadian ecclesiastical carvings, paintings, a hooked rug, a rocking horse and beaver and pirate weather vanes.

Mrs. Larmon's collection has continued to grow in the two months since the 40 original pieces have been in Toronto for photographs and cataloguing.

She recently acquired a tiny rocking horse carved in Elgin County more than 100 years ago.

And despite a recent illness which put her in the hospital, Mrs. Larmon does not think she will ever stop her search for folk art.

"I promised myself I wouldn't buy anything else when I went into the hospital," she said.

"But as soon as I got out, I just couldn't wait to buy another piece of art."

She admits some nervousness about seeing the exhibit displayed in a gallery setting, for the only place they have ever been shown is among the antique furniture, quilts, china and paintings that are lovingly strewn about her farm house.

LIKE FAMILY

She says it's like having members of her family away from home.

Mrs. Larmon is giving a good deal of thought to whether she will allow her collection to be shown at other galleries across the country, but that decision will come at a later date.

But for now she's looking forward to the exhibit opening June 20 in Windsor, and then to having her art back home in Burgessville where it belongs.

The show runs from June 20 to August 29 at the Walker Gallery, Art Gallery of Windsor.



MAE WEST, sex symbol of the 1920's and 1930's, died Saturday in her Hollywood apartment. She was 87. (AP LASERPHOTO)

Mae West is dead

out of bed while dreaming about Burt Reynolds.

Paul Novak, the blonde sex queen's constant companion for the last 26 years, promised "the greatest Hollywood funeral we've ever had."

However, a spokesman for the mortuary handling funeral arrangements said Sunday that details about the services would not be released, at the request of her friends and family.



Hanging in there

Former Otterville resident Joanne Pettigrew spent Thursday afternoon hanging 17 of her art works at the Ingersoll Creative Arts Centre for a showing that started Sunday and runs through to December 9.

Joanne Pettigrew art on display



Mrs. Dickson, who was the public school board's vice-chairman for 1980, is entering her fifth year of service on the board. She will make her inaugural address at the next board meeting on Dec. 8 at which time the members of the various committee of the board will be named.

Passing the gavel

Outgoing chairman of the Oxford County board of education Ron Doney, from East Zorra-Tavistock, handed over the gavel and the seat of chairman to Norwich Township Trustee Helen Dickson at the board's inaugural meeting Monday night. Mrs. Dickson has been a member of the board for four years. (NG Photo).