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CURIO SHOP: UNEXPECTED ARTIFACTS OF THE MISSION INN TO REVEAL THE WEIRD AND WONDERFUL IN MILLER'S COLLECTION

RIVERSIDE, CA., August 31, 2018 —Wolves, dragons, magical dogs, lobsters, and gnomes are just a few of the creatures making their way into the Mission Inn Museum's next exhibition, *Curio Shop: Unexpected Artifacts of the Mission Inn*, opening September 28, 2018.

Foundation members are invited to an early viewing from 5:00-6:00 p.m. on September 28, with a public reception following from 6:00-8:00 p.m. The Mission Inn Museum is located at 3696 Main Street in the National Historic Landmark Mission Inn Hotel & Spa. There is no museum admission; however, there is a suggested \$2 donation. Light refreshments will be served.

Frank Miller, the Master of the Inn, was an avid collector of bells, dolls, art, sculpture, and other decorative arts. He personally acquired many items during his travels to Asia and Europe and worked with dealers and craftsmen to expand his collection. Other members of the Miller family contributed, including his sister Alice Miller Richardson, who coordinated specialty art exhibitions and decided on purchases. Daughter Allis Hutchings purchased bells for her father and her children's toys ended up as part of Frank's doll collection.

"The Mission Inn Foundation and Museum is proud to present this exciting new exhibition which will activate our gallery and spark new ways of looking at our collection. In our contemporary world where we "curate" our fashion and home décor, create boards with objects and images of interest, and post intriguing videos and pictures of the weird and wonderful around us, this exhibition offers insight into how our predecessors did the same," says Gina Cavallo Collins, Executive Director of the Mission Inn Foundation and Museum.

Between 1900 to the mid-1950s, the hotel's hallways, event rooms, salons, lobby, and guest rooms were adorned with items hand-picked by Frank. The building was his personal cabinet of curiosities, with many of the displayed items available for purchase to the right buyer. When the hotel passed out of the Miller family in 1956, much of the collection was sold, stolen, or trashed. However, the Mission Inn Foundation was formed in 1976 with the objective to preserve the remaining pieces. Over the last 42 years, people have donated many items back to the Foundation with the intent that they are preserved for future research and interpretation. Many of the objects in *Curio Shop* are these recently returned "lost" treasures, including new acquisitions from 2017 and 2018.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, collecting was a trendy hobby bordering on obsession for many people in the United States and Europe. Cabinets of curiosities soared in popularity, hand in hand with the Grand Tour of Europe, as guidebooks and publications advised collectors on what was required to compose a properly balanced cabinet. Also referred to as curio cabinets, these displays were the inspiration for some

of the earliest museums as friends, family, and eventually the public flocked to see the best and biggest collections.

Collections Manager Karen Raines says, “The Mission Inn was not your average cabinet of curiosity because Frank Miller was not your average collector. While other collectors of curiosities strove to understand the world, Miller sought to marvel at and celebrate the talent and ingenuity of humans. He preferred art to animal horns, bells to botanical pressings, and statues to specimens.”

Curio Shop: Unexpected Artifacts of the Mission Inn will explore the history of collecting, cabinets of curiosities, and the development of the Mission Inn’s collection. We invite guests to the exhibition opening reception on September 28 to celebrate cabinets and curio collections with your favorite costume or accessories from the Victorian, Steampunk, Dickens, or Edwardian styles. The exhibition will be open for daily viewing through February 28, 2019.

The Mission Inn Museum is open daily from 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. with extended hours during the 26th Annual Festival of Lights. Family programs are offered in conjunction with Arts Walk and First Sundays. More information on the *Curio Shop* exhibition, member benefits, and upcoming programs is available at www.MissionInnMuseum.org.

About the Mission Inn Foundation and Museum

The Mission Inn Foundation was incorporated in 1976 to assist in the preservation and restoration of the Mission Inn Hotel & Spa, and originally, to manage the hotel during ownership by the City of Riverside’s Redevelopment Agency. The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa is now privately owned by Duane and Kelly Roberts, and the Foundation has a unique role of operating a non-profit museum within a for-profit hotel. In addition to the museum, the Mission Inn Foundation interprets the history and significance of the Mission Inn through daily hotel tours, monthly public programs and special events, the Hands On History educational outreach program, and the continued stewardship of the hotel’s expansive art, artifact, and archival collections.

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Fu Dog Statue, n.d. Originally from China, acquired by Frank Miller and formerly on display at the Mission Inn Hotel & Spa. PC: Mission Inn Foundation





The Cloister Art Shop depicted on an historic postcard printed by the Mission Inn Hotel, n.d. Frank Miller sourced many of the pieces himself. This space is now called the Ramona Court and leads into what is now called the Grand Parisian Ballroom. PC: Mission Inn Foundation

