

## **Foley Auction Ends Era**

*By Lee Cassidy - The Upper Canadian  
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CORNWALL, Ont. - On October 13, Theresa Taylor sold by unreserved public auction the contents of the historic Foley House in Westport Ontario. The sale took place at the Cornwall Civic Complex. She was assisted by auctioneer David Beasley.

Six generations have enjoyed the 1867 Foley home, made three bricks thick and of the best available materials. It contained furniture manufactured in Ontario between 1847 and 1908. Many of the styles recognized by collectors of Georgian and Victorian furnishings are represented, including Larkin and Eastlake. The most significant fact was that nothing had been taken away by those who inherited the property over the generations.

After 150 years, the closure of the Foley Estate of Westport, Ontario will not remove the contribution of this family to the development of the community.

Declan Finbar Foley was born 1819 in Youghal, County Cork, Ireland, one of five children. After his father's death in 1836, Declan and his sister Bridget emigrated to live with their uncle Rev. Patrick Foley in Ogdensburg, New York. Traveling to Kingston, Ontario, where brother John, had entered the Regeopolis College, Declan spent a few years employed by the Honorable John Hamilton. Declan's move to Prescott and his marriage to Mary Ann Buckley of the township of Beckwith, near Almonte in 1846 was the beginning of a new branch of the Foley family. In 1851, after spending five years with his brother Michael, who owned a general store in Chicago, Declan was drawn to Westport by his brother John, who was a circuit Priest. It was the beginning of the era of the Foley's of Westport.

The waterfront had become a thriving commercial center, with the steam ships Rideau King and Queen ferrying people and supplies between Ottawa and Kingston. Declan soon established a mercantile and forwarding business with docking at the base of his property.

The general store opened by Declan Foley, and continued by his son John, operated from 1867 until 1945. The store supplied the Westport community with such diverse items as farm equipment, building supplies, mortgages, fabrics, eyeglasses and medicinal products.

Although Declan and Mary Ann had many children - sixteen within twenty-two years - four children died in their youth. All of the children were highly educated. The youngest, Mary - known as "Birdie"- loved nature and was a talented painter. Of

course, no young lady of that time would be encouraged to sell her art; such talent was considered a private gift. As a result, many of Birdie's paintings, in handsome frames, have hung in the Foley drawing room to this day. They sold well at the auction, the highest price paid \$990.

Foley House, has been used for fundraising and charity events. In 1992, the 125th anniversary of confederation was celebrated with special toast to Sir John A. Macdonald, who was reputed to have stayed with his friend Declan Foley on his many trips between Ottawa and Kingston. A signed photo of Macdonald fetched \$467.50. A pair of Georgian-style knife boxes without their inserts earned \$1,760. A tall case clock, works manufactured by Thomas Sanderson, Dublin, brought \$3,300, a pine washstand fetched \$1,000 as did an Empire-style dresser in veneers.

The disheartening task of dispersing home and contents rested on the shoulders of Ursula Gilhooly, great-granddaughter of Declan Finbar Foley, bringing to a close the era of an early settler and prominent founding family of Westport.

*A grouping of nine carpet balls sold for \$49.50 each, or \$445.50 all together.*

*This Bradley and Hubbard table lamp brought \$770.*

*A Quezal ceiling fixture commanded a closing bid of \$1,870.*

*A large cylinder secretary desk hammered down for \$4,070.*

*Apparently German in origin, this jardiniere decorated with scenes of children playing brought \$650 in spite of a poor repair.*

*This hotel bell with tiny drawers for keys or tags was one of many very interesting and unique smaller items offered at the sale. It sold for \$247.50.*

*A large dining room sideboard dating from the last half 19th century, attributed to cabinetmaker David Hogg of Perth, Ontario \$3,080.*