

Dollhouse is a 'Life House' for Corrie Clark



By Brock Weir

As a little girl watching *The Friendly Giant* on the CBC, Corrie Clark was transfixed by that little chair to curl up in. For many Canadians, that is a simple childhood memory but it planted some very important seeds of dreams for the Aurora resident. From that point on, wherever Ms. Clark went, she picked up bits and pieces of 'life in miniature,' a 40-year-journey which is now on display at Town Hall.

Earlier this month, Ms. Clark, joined by Shawna White, Curator of the Aurora Museum & Archives, put the finishing touches on her grand and glorious doll house, which features, quite literally, everything but the kitchen sink.

Correction, it is not a mere doll house. Let Ms. Clark explain:

'It is a 'life house' for me,' she says. 'It is a life story.'

But the house itself has a life story she is only too eager to uncover.

'I bought the house a couple of years ago in an Aurora auction and I have been searching for it all my life,' she says. 'No one else bid, so feel having this magnificent house was meant to be. I would love to see someone come by Town Hall with their story and add to it so we know who made this house.'

The house was part of an estate sale held in the town house complex across the road from Aurora High School. It was part of a collection of unlikely items Ms. Clark suspects must have been inherited by the homeowner due to the sheer size of the pieces compared to the house. What she does know is a lot of love was put in the house, everything from fine moulding to real crystal accents, and some very pricy, high quality features.

'It is a true treasure of Aurora,' says Ms. Clark. 'I swear to God I came to Aurora to find this house because I searched through Europe and everywhere. Everything I had fit this house perfectly, so I think it was kismet.'

So was catching the *Friendly Giant* as a tot.

By the time she was nine or 10 she had already amassed the beginnings of a fine collection, carrying her 'bucket' of miniature furniture everywhere she went to simply add more. Every time I saw a doll house store, like a crazy cat lady, I had to stop and buy something for the doll house, just a little thing that would go in my pocket.'

Somewhere along the way, however, her collection took on a more personal touch, adding very unique things to her bucket, and her successive doll houses.

As an actress, Ms. Clark portrayed Belle Gardiner in the 1994 film adaptation of *'Little Women'* starring Winona Ryder, Susan Sarandon, Christian Bale and Mary Wickes. As such, miniature copies of Louisa May Alcott's classic novel found their way into Ms. Clark's 'life house' along with miniature Oscars to represent her acting career. (See if you can find them!)

When her children were born, Ms. Clark had mementos of their birth miniaturized and immortalized for the collection, along with pieces created by her own loved ones, including blankets and other textiles created by her late aunt.

'I really think there was a 'life house' ambition for me,' she says. 'It has become a metaphor to my history. Everything I look at I know where I got it, or I know what the sentiment is.'

She hopes some of these feelings are universal when members of the public take in the display, which will be at Town Hall through the beginning of January.

?I think it is reminiscent of our childhood and of a more innocent time,? she says. ?I think we're all fascinated and there is something in this house that will remind everybody of their past history. There is a lot of love, a lot of sentiment and a big journey that went into this house. I think it is too much now for me to hold onto by myself and I think we share our lives with people. It is no different than writing a book. Is my life house complete? Well, I'm not an old woman yet, but there is so much to it now!?