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## Royal Order Kingdom of Poland Departs...Taking some of Historic Utica Along

Posted by **Mark** on October 4th, 2011

By CASSANDRA HARRIS-LOCKWOOD

### [Utica Phoenix \(http://www.uticaphoenix.net\)](http://www.uticaphoenix.net)

Princess Diana Lenska, the poorly received descendent of Polish King Stanislaw Leszcynski, vacated 294 Genesee last week. Lenska, who established the Royal Order Kingdom of Poland at the site, departed with a small entourage the evening of Thursday, September, 29. With them has gone a significant portion of the architectural elements of what once was known as 'the most beautiful home in the City of Utica.'

The removal of these items from 294 Genesee St. has caused major protest in The Landmark Society and the preservationist community. The building was once the home of the Catholic Women's Club, being originally built by Congressman Orasmus Matteson in 1842.

In an exclusive conversation with Lenska and her agent, it was learned that the items sold were limited to the several fireplace mantles, including those composed of white Carrera marble, the chandeliers, and mirrors from the mansion.

According to Lenska, "All of the artifacts that have been removed are intact and are being held as a collection with all of the documentation connecting them to Orasmus Matteson. They are safe in the possession of a preservation conservationist. They are being properly cared for."

In speaking to the buyer, it was confirmed that the items removed from the mansion were limited to those listed above. Lenska explained she had been hospitalized for months prior to the decision to vacate the property.

"I contacted Mike Bosak from the Landmarks Society to see if there was any interest in them taking over to the house, or buying certain elements from the property. He said he would contact the Landmark membership to see if he could find among them a buyer and that he would get back to me. I never heard back from him."

Bosak, president of the Landmarks Society responded, "She called me in April to say that she was putting the building up for sale, and asked if I knew of anyone who might be interested in the purchase of the property. She never at any time mentioned the 'elements.' However, by the cryptic tone of her voice, I feared what she might do. All I agreed to do was look around for a potential buyer or someone interested.

"By her stripping the building, even though she technically has the right to do so, she ends up hurting the few people who supported her in her efforts to establish and maintain the Cultural Embassy. The Landmarks Society feels betrayed, because this is precisely the type of thing that we have been trying to avoid all along."

Lenska said that it was illness that ultimately caused her to make the decision to leave Utica. "It was several months of me being in and out of the hospital. The doctors originally thought it was stage four lymphoma cancer. What I have is Sarcoidosis. It is a disease of the lungs that mimics cancer.

"We didn't have any income coming in. I was unable to function and didn't know what was going to happen, where we were going to live. The last thing I wanted to do was to leave the place at the mercy of the elements and/or vandals.

"We had a break-in when we were in the building. This neighborhood is not safe. The Orthodox Church around the corner and the dentist office next door to us has both been broken into as well.

"We brought in people who were helping us, trying to get the tax situation settled. The City of Utica refused to acknowledge our tax-exempt status. The Federal and State Government recognize our tax-exempt status. The City would not.

"The City started foreclosure proceedings one year after the first taxes weren't paid. The first year we were late in filing in August. We lost the option the first year. Admittedly, the papers were filed late. But they wouldn't accept the papers. They never acknowledged the papers had been delivered. The back taxes with current taxes, plus court fees, amounted to

\$25,000 because they refused to acknowledge our not-for-profit status.

“And the City refused to negotiate. We sat for an hour with the Assessor and other representatives from the city in August. They insisted that we must pay all the back taxes before they will accept current taxes. My supporters met with them to work out a payment schedule, to put down a substantial amount and pay the balance over time. The Assessor went off on a rant against me and the Royal Order, and refused to agree upon a payment plan schedule. They were not open in any way to help us make it happen.

“They would rather have me gone, abandon the building, put it at-risk and foreclose on it than work out a deal.”

“My fear was that once I left there would be no one there to protect it leaving it vulnerable to further break-ins, vandalism, or outright theft. Without any income, being sick and all, we couldn't afford to keep the fuel on. There would have been so much more deterioration so the decision was made to sell the main architectural elements into safe hands, keeping them as a collection.

“I tried to sell the house on Craigslist, and other on-line means. There was interest but as soon as people heard the property was in Utica, they weren't interested. Such is the reputation of this city,” said Lenska. “I can't say as I blame them. I have witnessed what Utica thinks of my life's work. I only came here to do good.”

Lenska's departure from the City of Utica was not unexpected. Her deteriorating health notwithstanding, the lack of civility extended to her by the community during the early days of her stay were harsh, to say the least. Cries of 'fake' from the Observer-Dispatch, rude treatment at the Polish Home in Rome, and a lack of support for her various fundraising efforts combined to make for a failed attempt for Lenska to call Utica home.

Local preservation enthusiast and member of Landmarks, Pamela Jardieu stated, “I call into question the authenticity of her fundraising intentions. On more than one occasion she raised money from the public for the express and stated purpose of 'historic preservation.’” Yet, in the end, her own actions prove, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that her true motivation all along was to profit from this City's historic treasures, not preserve them. Her actions are a direct violation of the IRS principal of donor intent, and her non-profit status should be reconsidered by the State of New York.”

Landmarks' Bosak commented, “I really don't think that she is evil; however, I think that she had no idea how to actually pull this together and make the property self-sustaining. She was borrowing ideas from us (Landmarks), but she was wearing out her “market” by having too many 'High Victorian Teas at Versailles.’ I mean, what did she expect?

“We had the Holiday House event at 294 Genesee, and split the profits with her, and she complained because it wasn't very much – but she did absolutely SQUAT to promote it herself! The saddest part is that all of the naysayers get to say “I told you so,”” said Bosak.

One time supporter and current detractor, Robert Sullivan, has been very definitive in his estimation on his new blog [www.aroundthecitywithbobbysullivan.blogspot.com](http://aroundthecitywithbobbysullivan.blogspot.com). (<http://aroundthecitywithbobbysullivan.blogspot.com/>) You can read his comments there.

Although Princess Diana Lenska's has fallen from grace in Utica, her success in Europe continues to develop and has actually put Utica on the world map. As a result of the Monte Cassino program and exhibit Lenska created in Utica in 2010, a worldwide effort continues to recognize Polish war veterans, now mostly in their late 80's and 90's, with Medals of Valor.

As recently as September 23, 2011, that British press reported the Sgt. James Hughes (92), of Sutton, received his medal with a Guard of Honor during a ceremony at Skegby Royal British Legion on Saturday. The medals were awarded by Colonel The Lord John Goodenough, on behalf of the Royal House of Poland – as a mark of respect to the soldiers who

helped win the second world war for the Allies.

In recognition of Lenska's insistence that Polish heroes be recognized, Goodenough said, "Medals were promised by the British Government and the Allies, but they never materialized and the war moved on.

"It was decided two years ago (in Utica) to award the medals and the search has been going on ever since. Her Royal Highness Princess Diana Lenska has paid for the medals herself and we have awarded them in Hong Kong, Poland, England, and America. Anybody who fought in the battle should contact me and they will be awarded a Medal of Honor," said Goodenough.\*


Over the past year Lenska's royal status has been recognized in other European nations including Spain.

Ms. Lenska's plans are currently focused on regaining her health. And the future remains unclear as she considers re-establishing the Royal Order in another state or overseas, depending upon the circumstances that develop.

As far as the return of the architectural items removed from 294 Genesee Street, the buyer indicated that the pieces were being cleaned and catalogued. When asked if the items could be bought back, either individually or as a collection and at what price, the response was, "I will get back to you."

According to Lenska, 294 Genesee Street will be foreclosed by the City in mid- November. This would mean that the property purchased in 2009 by The Royal Order Kingdom of Poland and A Better Tomorrow, the not-for-profit run by Paul Kan of Hong Kong that paid the \$250,000 for the 'tidy palace,' could conceivably be purchased for \$25,000 or 1/10<sup>th</sup> of that amount at a tax sale.

\*Chad.co.uk

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