



Ten McKain photo

■ RIFFINGTON'S Louis XVI-style furniture and Persian carpets are part of the largest estate sale ever handled by Lunds Auctioneers.

Mansion's furnishings on the auction block

Much of the flatware and crystal was used to entertain royalty—and royalty

More than 550 pieces from the estate of a Victoria ship-building tycoon, much of it used to entertain royalty, are going on the auction block.

Fine furniture, Persian carpets, antique silver, Chinese porcelain, rare statues and crystal will be auctioned in Victoria on March 24 and 25. "It is the largest single estate sale we've ever handled," said John Boyle, president of Lunds Auctioneers.

The furnishings are from the estate of industrialist and sportsman Hubert Wallace, who died in 1984. They are the contents of Riffington, his former residence.

Situated on 1.4 manicured hectares of Beach Drive waterfront, the property was bought recently by newspaper owner David Black, who plans to move from Williams Lake March 15. Asking price for the mansion was \$1.7 million.

Wallace, who was vice-president of Burrard Shipyards in Vancouver and Yarrow Shipyards in Victoria,

bought Riffington in 1946 and lived there until his death.

He entertained princes and shipping magnates and every governor general and lieutenant-governor of Canada appointed since 1947.

Much of the antique silver flatware, lead crystal, candelabra and European china used to entertain these guests will be included in the auction.

"It is difficult to estimate the entire value of the furniture and other items — but it is certainly hundreds of thousands of dollars," Boyle said.

The volume and variety of the pieces make it difficult to cite any one example as more rare or interesting than another, he said.

"There are some very fine continental pieces and a broad spectrum of English antiques; also, a good selection of contemporary Canadian art and European still life paintings.

"I particularly like the superb Georgian triple-pedestal dining table

— it easily seats 14 and there are two sets of eight dining-room chairs."

There are Chinese black lacquer bureaux, writing desks, drum seats and nests of tables 200 years old. There is also an unusual Chinese clock with a radio inside.

There are rare mahogany corner display cabinets, cut-crystal candelabra, an inlaid mahogany sideboard, a pair of Blackmoor figures, several early Nepalese carvings, cases of French porcelains and rooms full of Louis XVI-style furniture.

"We have been cataloging for weeks and weeks," said Boyle. "We decided we had to hold the auction in the Harbor Towers ballroom because our showrooms couldn't hold it all."

Four days of preview showings start March 22 and Boyle said he expects collectors and dealers from as far away as Toronto.

Walking through Riffington as pieces were being crated and packed Tuesday, Boyle pointed out gleaming hearth fenders, fire dogs, French fire screens and solid brass fire tools.

Reception room tables were laden with German silver plates, rare and ancient spiral stemware standing almost half a metre high, early English salt cellars, bevelled glass boxes and a set of silver pheasants.

In the foyer stood a 17th-century oak double drop-leaf gateleg table. On the floors were Persian carpets, and the pantry was brimming with china, organized in services of 12 and more.

Eric Charman, son-in-law of Hubert Wallace, said Riffington was furnished by Wallace's wife Gladys, who died in 1972.

Her eclectic taste is reflected in the furnishings, he said.

"She was always at the auctions . . ."

"The attic and basement were stuffed with furniture . . . you could hardly walk through them.

"Gladys never missed an auction, wherever she was. She would hop on a plane if she heard of an interesting one somewhere."