

# Silver Collecting in Ontario: A Brief History, c. 1950-2021

By Peter Kaellgren

Provenance has always been an important part of documenting great art and silver. Since the 1980s, the history of collecting and provenance has become an established field of study for the entire art and decorative arts field with journals devoted to the subject and specialized articles being published. In Ontario, an amazing outburst of collecting activity occurred in the period c. 1950-2000, largely concentrated in the Toronto area. The two key areas of focus were early English porcelain and British silver. So far as I know, most of the important collectors from this era have died and their collections have been dispersed. This paper is based on what I remember and have discovered over the years, in a few cases from my connections to the persons involved. The account is far from complete, but it provides a framework for others to build on.

The main collectors whom I remember include Mr. Richard G. Meech Senior; Robert W. Gouinlock Senior and his wife Margaret; Norman S. and Marian A. Robertson; and Robert Morton and Gladys Robertson. John Langdon will be mentioned briefly.

To put things into context, before 1950, there seems to have been only limited and sporadic collecting of silver in Ontario. A number of the established English Canadian families who had been here for generations owned some silver but there was very little in the way of specialist dealers or systematic collecting. The Royal Ontario Museum owned a small collection of mainly British silver with very few important pieces along with a few representative pieces of Sheffield Plate. There was some collecting of Canadian silver, mainly through Henry Birks & Sons in Montreal, an established Canadian chain of stores that had begun manufacturing silver and electroplate in the 1800s. Birks was able to assemble a collection of early Quebec silver, mostly ecclesiastical, apparently pieces that were sold off by Catholic churches to purchase more contemporary religious articles or to finance building repairs. The French-Canadian scholar Marius Barbeau wrote about early French Canadian decorative arts stimulating interest in furniture and silver. The bulk of the Birks Collection of Canadian Silver was ultimately donated to the National Gallery of Canada, where it is housed in its own vault, and the Canadiana section of the Royal Ontario Museum.

The year 1947 marked a turning point. Lord Lee of Fareham died and left his collection of early silver to the University of Toronto to be displayed at Hart House. Lord Lee was well-known in collecting and decorative arts circles in England. (Fig. 1) After he retired from politics in 1921, he devoted much of his time to serving on boards and collecting. His wife Ruth was an American heiress with family money. Lee collected old master paintings and served prominently on the Board of the National Gallery in London. With financial support from Samuel Courtauld, the rayon manufacturer, he helped to establish the Courtauld Institute for the study of the History of Art in London. Courtauld was a well-known collector of Impressionist art. Arthur Lee was able to bring the Warburg Institute, a scholarly institution for studying art history, from Germany to join the Courtauld just before World War II. He also promoted antique shows like the Grosvenor House Show. Lord Lee donated his old master paintings to the Courtauld Institute. Lee's silver collection focussed on silver and vertu from the Middle Ages to the 18<sup>th</sup> century with an emphasis on English and German examples.(Figs . 2/3)



Fig. 1: Lord Lee of Fareham



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Fig. 2 Aldobrandini Tazza, 1587-1599, possibly Netherlands, 997.158.151

Fig. 3 Diana on the Stag, Matthias Wallbaum (1554-1632) Augsburg, active there 1579-1632, 997.158.152.1

Both images © Royal Ontario Museum

This collection also included early illuminated books.

When Vincent Massey was serving as Canadian High Commissioner in London in the late 1930s, he met Lord Lee. The Lees and the Massey's became friends. Lee was inspired by the charter principles of Hart House, which the Massey Family had endowed as a men's cultural and athletic center for the University of Toronto. He decided that its objectives coincided with his own and he bequeathed the greater part of this important collection to Hart House when he unexpectedly died from appendicitis in 1947. The bequest of the Lee Collection to a Canadian institution is often interpreted as a "thank you" to Canada for assisting Britain in World War II. Thus, the collection became part of the University of Toronto with Dr. Yvonne Hackenbroch (1912-2012), a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany, in charge of installing the collection between 1947 and 1949. Hackenbroch had worked at the British Museum and assisted Lord Lee with the collection in England.

The Lee Collection was available for viewing on a limited schedule. The Royal Ontario Museum was part of the University of Toronto until 1968 when it became independent. Quite unsurprisingly, for reasons of access and security, the Lee Collection was transferred to the Royal Ontario Museum in 1961 where it remained on loan from The Massey Foundation, which held it in trust for the Estate of Lord Lee.

One of the reasons that likely made the transfer logical was the loan exhibition *English Silver: Seven Centuries of English Domestic Silver* in 1958 which was organized by the Royal Ontario Museum "Under the distinguished patronage of" Vincent Massey, who was by this time Governor-General of Canada. The arrival of the Lee Collection at the University of Toronto potentially provided inspiration for collectors and scholars.

Yvonne Hackenbroch published a modest catalogue since an extensive one privately published by Lord Lee in 1935 already existed.<sup>1</sup> Miss Hackenbroch went on to the Metropolitan Museum of Art where she became personal curator to Judge Irwin Untermyer, one of its most distinguished donors, and where she researched and published seven catalogues of his various donations. She eventually retired to London, England, where members of her family lived.

One of the largely unrecognized side effects of the English Silver exhibition at the Royal Ontario Museum in 1958, was the establishment of the Members' Volunteer Committee. A number of the most prominent women in Toronto who were the wives of judges, lawyers, businessmen, etc. volunteered to tour the exhibition and were carefully trained as docents. I seem to recall that they had to wear dresses or skirts and possibly even gloves. Because of the success of the exhibition and the tours, the Members' Volunteer Committee continued and has evolved to the Department of Museum Volunteers (DMV) that continues to function at the ROM today. In the course of training to be docents these women in 1958 would have gained knowledge about silver and enthusiasm for the topic which they would have shared with their husbands and friends.

In spring, 1997, the Massey Foundation transferred the trusteeship of the Lee Collection legally through the courts to the Royal Ontario Museum. This was largely in recognition of the manner in which the European Curators had prominently displayed the Lee Collection and made it accessible for research and publication. Since October, 1989, when the north wing of the Samuel European Galleries officially opened, the Lee Collection has been presented opposite its entrance, where it serves as a simulation of the medieval cathedral treasuries and Renaissance *Shatzkammer* (German for room of treasures and curiosities) which were the precursors of the modern-day museum.

Among the members of the ROM committee for *Seven Centuries of English Domestic Silver* was Richard G. Meech Senior (popularly referred to as "Dick Meech"). (Fig. 4) Richard George Meech, QC (1893-1990) became best known among silver collectors during the 1960s-70s for a series of Christmas cards adorned with luscious colour photographs of silver, clocks and other items from his distinguished collection. The photographs were taken by Leighton



Fig. 4 Richard G. Meech (1893-1990), Toronto lawyer, businessman and collector. Portrait photo c. 1970 in the Boardroom, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada.

Image © Royal Ontario Museum

<sup>1</sup> William W. Watts, F.S.A., *Works of Art in Silver and Other Materials belonging to Viscount and Viscountess Lee of Fareham*. Privately printed in 1936 by Herbert Reiach Limited, London.



Fig. 5

Fig. 5 Toilet Service, cast and repousse silver. English, London, c. 1715-1728: mark of David Willaume I and on the snuffers and tray, Augustin Courtauld. H (mirror frame) 57.4 cm. Mirror frame, ewer and basin, pair of candlesticks, various boxes, bottles and two sets of brushes with a candle snuffer and tray. Collection of the Royal Ontario Museum, Gift of Richard G. Meech. 981.210.1-27

Image © Royal Ontario Museum

("Lee") Warren who was Head of ROM Photography for many years. A set of these cards is preserved in the Meech file in the Registration Department of the Royal Ontario Museum.

Dick Meech was very important as a collector and potentially inspired others in Toronto. Unfortunately, it is not always easy to document his activities precisely. One thing that points to his interest and tenacity is the Toilet Set, F.41. on page 41 of the *Seven Centuries* catalogue. (Fig. 5) The Viscount Cowdray loaned this exceptional Baroque silver toilet service by David Willaume which included pieces by Augustin Courtauld. A few years later, through the prominent London silver dealer Mrs. G. E. P. How of How of Edinburgh, Richard Meech was able to purchase the toilet service. Mrs. How, who had coordinated the *Seven Centuries* exhibition from the English side, even assisted by finding a period-appropriate silver box to match the single one, 3 x 3 inches.

Originally, the service would have included a pair of boxes of this size. Meech acquired this unusually complete service sometime before 1968 because the illustration in the *Prized Possessions* catalogue (page 146, no. 724) shows that the 28 pieces include the pair of smallest size boxes. Ultimately Mr. Meech presented the toilet service to the European Department of the Royal Ontario Museum where it is prominently displayed in the Baroque Section of the south wing of the Samuel European Galleries.<sup>2</sup>

Dick Meech's extensive collection included large examples of silver as well as unusual small pieces along with clocks and scientific instruments. I knew little of his collecting activity and met him only once when I asked to consult his copy of P. A. S. Phillips' *Paul de Lamerie*, a limited edition book published in the 1930s. During the pandemic, I was able to discover more about his original collecting as a result of another of his donations, a superb ivory table barometer with bronze mounts made by Daniel Quare, one of the finest instrument makers in London during the 1690s. I published this barometer in the 2021 volume of the *Furniture History Society Journal* which was dedicated to the English scholar Nicholas Goodison. For reasons yet to be determined, this barometer, which is one of the finest from the period, was not included in Goodison's landmark book on English barometers that appeared in 1969. As a result of my brief article, I heard from John Hudson in London, England. John had worked for Christie's from 1965 to 1990 and subsequently for Sotheby's.

<sup>2</sup> For a full account of this toilet service which is very similar to one in the collection of the Ashmolean Museum, see Peter Kaellgren, "French influence in a toilet service by David Willaume," *The Silver Society Journal* 4 (Autumn,1993): 162-172.

According to Hudson, Dick Meech purchased the barometer from his great uncle James Oakes who was a trained horologist descended from a family of clockmakers. After being seriously wounded in World War I, Oakes opened a London shop in 1918 dealing in antique clocks and scientific instruments. He continued in business until his death in 1960 when he was in the process of re-locating to 121 New Bond Street. His antique dealing seems to have expanded well beyond clocks over the years as he negotiated the sale of the historic Chelsea porcelain service made in 1763 for George III and Queen Charlotte as a gift to her brother the Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. This was purchased by friends and returned to the Royal Family as a special gift to Elizabeth the Queen Mother on the occasion of George and Elizabeth's Silver Wedding Anniversary in 1948. This suggests that Mr. Meech was dealing with one of the top dealers with excellent connections to the London trade.

John Hudson believes that "Dick Meech was buying things from [his Great] Uncle in the 1950s as he and my aunt made an extensive visit to Canada visiting Dick as well as travelling on that amazing cross Canada Railway across the Rockies. . ." Hudson states that "Dick was one of James's clients buying silver and clocks as well as being a good friend." His great aunt Amy Oakes continued the business after her husband's death. Travelling with that aunt, Mr. Hudson recalls visiting Richard Meech at the Park Plaza Hotel where he lived for many years. It was December, 1966, and "the splendid Daniel Quare barometer" was part of the furnishings of the hotel suite.

Richard Meech Sr. served as Chair of the ROM Board of Trustees from 1968-69 until the fiscal year 1970-71, a crucial period in the development of the Museum. In 1968, the ROM severed its administrative connections to the University of Toronto which had begun at the founding of the Museum in 1914. This required careful management at the Board level. Collecting was then common among the top members of Toronto Society. This is reflected in the important loan exhibition of primarily British antiques that the Museum organized entitled *Prized Possessions from Private Homes* (8 October to 8 December, 1968). The list of the committee members at the beginning of the catalogue reads like a Who's Who of collectors in Ontario. The two largest categories were British silver, supervised by Mrs. Morton (Gladys) Robertson, and ceramics, which were mostly English. Mr. Meech's barometer was no 274 in the catalogue.

In 1971, Mr. Meech donated his Quare barometer to the Royal Ontario Museum through the Ontario Heritage Foundation, a provincial body established to process important, high value gifts. When the Ontario Heritage Foundation was dissolved in the late 1980s, full title to the barometer and other pieces on loan was transferred to the Royal Ontario Museum. Richard Meech's donations to the ROM include the Willaume toilet service, a superb, Regency silver-gilt centrepiece by Paul Storr and a rare silver spoon and two-pronged fork made in the early 1600s in the Mannerist style displayed in the Culture & Context section of the European Galleries. So far as I know, museum curators were never invited to see his whole collection. Living in a suite at the Park Plaza Hotel, perhaps he never had the space to display that many pieces. The finer silver was sold by Sotheby's, New York, in two single owner sales: 22 October, 1993, and 17 October, 1995. The remaining pieces, which seem to have been considered of lesser value and interest, were offered by Waddington's, Toronto, as part of a Decorative Art sale on 11 December, 2013.

According to Heribert Hickl-Szabo (more commonly known as Heri = Harry) the Head of the European Department at the Royal Ontario Museum (1968-1985), Mr. Robert W. Gouinlock Sr. was a very fine gentleman and



Fig. 6

Fig. 6 Fireplace Equipment, repousse and filigree silver. English, London hallmarks for 1686 to 1688: mark of George Manjoy (c.1660-1725). Fire grate, one fire dog, fender, fire tongs, griddle and shovel. Collection of the Royal Ontario Museum, The Robert W. and Margaret E. Gouinlock Collection. Certified by the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board under the terms of the Cultural Property Export and Import Act. 988.33.40.1-6

Image ©Royal Ontario Museum ROM.

easy to get along with. On June 4, 1927, he married Margaret Elnia Walsh of Toronto. I got to know his wife Margaret in her 80s when she was trying to decide whether to donate her exceptional collection of early English silver toys, c. 1680-1760, to the Royal Ontario Museum. The Gouinlocks were ardent golfers, even travelling to Britain in the summers to be able to play on celebrated greens like St. Andrews. Mrs. Gouinlock told me that she and “her old man” (as she lovingly referred to him) first encountered antique silver when they visited the well-known dealer Hardcastle in York. They were looking for a pair of Sheffield Plate entrée dishes to purchase as a wedding present. This was probably just after World War II, perhaps 1950. Entrée dishes were one of the most approved wedding gifts among wealthy Torontonians at the time. Today one often encounters silverplate versions marked by Birks: low rectangular dishes with a fitted cover, a fitted liner to allow for hot water in the lower section to keep the food warm, and a handle that usually screws off of the cover. She never told me if they bought any entrée dishes but they did discover antique silver.

Together the couple acquired a collection of about four dozen pieces of important antique British silver including a superb quality monteith (bowl for rinsing and cooling wine glasses) made in London in the 1680s. It was apparently a star piece at the prestigious Grosvenor House antiques fair early in the 1950s. When her husband died around 1970, Margaret continued her interest in silver, maintained her membership in the English Silver Society, and decided that she would focus on collecting early English silver toys. She already owned a few examples. It is possible she was drawn to the toys because heirloom English silver toys belonging to The Earl of Bathurst were loaned to *English Silver: Seven Centuries of English Domestic Silver* when the exhibition was organized at the Royal Ontario Museum in 1958.<sup>3</sup> During World War II, Robert and Margaret Gouinlock had welcomed the Earl of Bathurst’s two young sons into their home as companions to their only child Robert Jr. In the *Seven Centuries* catalogue, the credit line for this loan suggests that one of these sons had attained the title upon the death of his father. He agreed to the loan because he was grateful for spending the War safely in Canada.

Margaret found it manageable to collect the toys because when she was able to find a good example during her travels, she could easily carry it home with her. Like many Canadian silver collectors, she had a favourite dealer in London, Richard Vander of the firm of C. J. Vander. Richard bid for her at major London auctions, especially the Ober Collection or silver

<sup>3</sup> “THE BATHURST MINIATURES.” 21 pieces with hallmarks ranging from 1690 to 1710. Credit line reads: “Lent by Lord Bathurst from his family heirlooms in appreciation of the many kindnesses received by him and his brother during their evacuation from England to Canada during the Second World War.”

toys at Christie's, London, on October 11, 1972. This was likely the most exceptional sale of the toys to ever take place. Mrs. Gouinlock paid a record price for a set of fireplace furniture made by George Manjoy which was duly noted in *The Times*. (Fig. 6)

In the 1980s, she continued to collect, though there were fewer interesting examples on the market. Occasionally she bought from Mrs. How of How of Edinburgh. I believe it was the 1970s when she travelled with the English Silver Society to Moscow to see the English silver in the Kremlin. When boarding the train, she discovered that she would have to share her sleeping compartment with a young Russian man. An older English couple in the Silver Society saved the day: the man's wife exchanged berths with the Russian. And the day was saved! I joined Tim Schroder's tour of California collections with the Silver Society in October, 1988. Four of us flew down together: the well-known Chinese blue and white porcelain collectors R. Murray Bell and his wife Anne, Margaret Gouinlock and myself. In those pre-911 days, airline service was exemplary. Because Mrs. Gouinlock had requested a wheelchair, she and her entourage of three Torontonians were escorted down private passageways and boarded the plane early.

Late in 1987, I went to discuss the possible donation of her silver toys with Margaret, son Robert Jr. and his wife Janet. The Gouinlocks were very gracious to me. After some thought, Margaret Gouinlock decided to donate her silver toys to the ROM. There are 148 entries on the list I prepared where the forms and sets are listed alphabetically. Because she had collected them after her husband's death, that was her collection and she felt she was at liberty to donate them. The English silver scholar Philippa Glanville has described this as the best collection of early English silver toys ever assembled.

Margaret and her husband Robert Sr. had collected the English and Scottish silver and the early English porcelain. The porcelain included some exceptional pieces such as two versions of the early Chelsea Owl in the white. She considered these two collections to be family property to be handed down to her son and his family. The couple's silver was sold by Christies, New York, after her death in 1991. Robert Jr. and Janet retained the porcelain collection for a number of years. Ultimately Albert Amor, the long-established London dealer, dispersed it. That is perhaps only appropriate since most of the Ontario collecting fraternity that I am discussing purchased porcelain from Mrs. George who headed Amors from 1951 to 2001.

Norman Stewart Robertson (1893-1988) was a prominent lawyer who still went into the office in his 90s. Norman's first wife passed away. In the 1950s, he proposed to Marian Adelaide De La Hooke (1905-2007) who was his secretary, and they decided to get married. Marian came from an old Toronto family.

The Robertsons developed many shared collecting interests including middle eastern carpets (which Norman had begun to appreciate in his youth from those in the waiting room of his father's physician), early English porcelain, Chinese snuff bottles, Japanese *tsuba* and silver. They were enthusiastic supporters of the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Royal Ontario Museum. Up to the 1970s, they often joined the exclusive tours that the AGO and the ROM organized. On one of these tours, they became friends with Herman Herzog Levy of Hamilton, an important donor to the Chinese collections at the ROM. They often bought silver when traveling and, until poor health intervened, flew to London to purchase silver, often with the help of Mrs. How of How of Edinburgh. Silver was their strongest and most diverse collection.

Marian Robertson once told me that she became interested in silver through an article in a popular English magazine. In younger years, she enjoyed the movies and followed the lives of favourite actors and actresses.

One of the articles described the flat of a husband and wife who were professional actors in London. There was a modern sofa in their lounge which had arms which were small showcases made of clear plastic ("Perspex" in England). The couple had assembled a collection of antique silver caddy spoons to display in these showcases. Marian was fascinated by these small objects and began buying them in Toronto around 1960. Over their lifetime, the Robertsons assembled a collection of several hundred, joined the collectors' club for caddy spoons, and purchased some of the new commemorative spoons commissioned by the club.

The Gouinlocks, the Morton Robertsons, Edgar and Louise Hawley Stone, J. Harold Crang, John and Eustella Langdon, and other members of Toronto Society were friends of Norman and Marian Robertson or were people they met in the course of their social life. Margaret Gouinlock and Marian Robertson were good friends. Socializing likely inspired their collecting and expanded the knowledge they gained from dealers and books. Among the small but important selection of Channel Islands silver in the Robertson gift to the ROM is a tiny teaspoon by Jacques Quesnel II or III of Jersey (accession no. 993-53.259.1) John Langdon had originally acquired it as possibly Canadian and then gave to Mrs. Robertson in 1979 on the occasion of the visit of the English Silver Society to Toronto.

I know much more about the Robertson's collecting because of the two gifts that Marian Robertson presented to the Royal Ontario Museum. In the course of documenting them, I asked her many questions and she cordially provided what background information she could recall. By 1968, Norman and Marian Robertson had already acquired a number of significant pieces of silver. Some of these are illustrated in *Prized Possessions from Private Homes*. Although listed there as anonymous loans, their provenance became clear when they were included in Marian Robertson's generous gifts to the ROM.

In the 1960s, the Robertsons were acquiring with the help of Mrs. How. They either purchased items from her stock or arranged for Ben How or one of her assistants to bid for them at London auctions. One such piece is the David Willaume brazier which is on display in the Samuel European Galleries. (Fig. 7) Although the Robertsons had set a limit on how much they would bid, Norman urged Mrs. How's assistant to go beyond this to acquire such a rare piece.

The Norman Robertsons were highly unconventional in acquiring silver. At the time, most Canadian collectors dealt only with dealers whom they considered reputable. The Robertsons were willing to buy from a wider range of sources including private individuals who contacted them by



Fig. 7

Fig. 7 Brazier with alcohol lamp, Britannia Standard silver, cast and chased. Ivory feet. English, London hallmarks for 1698-99, Mark of David Willaume I. Bowl: H 16.3 cm D 25 cm. Repousse panels of what appear to be Chinese workmanship, c. 1680-1690, are inserted into the side. Collection of the Royal Ontario Museum. Gift of Norman S. and Marian A. Robertson. Certified by the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board under the terms of the Cultural Property Export and Import Act. 988.254.3.1-3

Image © Royal Ontario Museum





Fig. 8

Fig. 8 Three-branch Candelabra, cast silver. English, London hallmarks for 1745, mark of John Cafe. H. 33.6 cm. Marian Robertson had admired this candelabra in the window of the Shrubsole silver shop near the British Museum in the early 1960s. Norman Robertson purchased it for her. It is illustrated as no. 745, page 149 in the *Prized Possessions* exhibition catalogue. Collection of the Royal Ontario Museum. Gift of Norman S. and Marian A. Robertson. Certified by the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board under the terms of the Cultural Property Export and Import Act. 993.53.98.1-2

Image © Royal Ontario Museum

telephone and mail. They bought from Toronto antique dealers like Lorenz Birciz and from local auctions. They particularly liked Bill Kime at Waddingtons. One of their contacts in New York City was Mr. Gorevic, a Jewish antique dealer from Europe. That is likely how they were able to acquire a number of interesting Russian pieces. Such establishments were generally shunned by the predominantly WASP dealing and collecting fraternity. Norman did not shy away to look into some of the seedier, messier shops which caused Mrs. Robertson to stay outside on the sidewalk. The Robertsons collected when they travelled. There is a fine quality Chinese Export Silver rosewater sprinkler c.1815 that Norman discovered in Cairo when he was there for a law convention. The end result of this lifetime of collecting was a silver collection that is strong in English and Scottish silver from the time of

Charles II to Victoria with a few more recent pieces. In addition, there are good representative examples of Channel Islands Silver, an interesting group of Chinese Export Silver, Scandinavian silver, Russian silver, and survey collections of caddy spoons and bottle tickets.

Marian Robertson donated their silver collection in two instalments. In 1988, following Norman's death, she donated a number of major pieces to help with death duties. These included a Charles II cage cup made in London by Wolfgang Howzer, an engraved nautilus shell cup by Cornelis Bellekin c. 1680/90 mounted in Vienna in 1690 in its original case, an exceptional pair of Victorian silver tureens made in Madras about 1845, and a pair of English baroque broth bowls from a toilet service. Norman had bought the covered bowls as a birthday gift for Marian.

Mrs. Robertson debated what to do with the remaining collection for several years. Like most of the great Toronto silver collections, it could have been consigned to auction. Many people considered that to be the easiest solution. Mrs. How offered to assist her in dispersing it through special exhibitions and sales. With the advice of her legal counsel, she discussed a possible donation to the Royal Ontario Museum with Gillian Pearson, our Registrar, and me. In 1992, she decided to donate to the ROM. This involved a tremendous amount of work and

research as hers was the most numerous and diverse silver collection ever to come to the Museum. The Robertson Gift in 1993 included 250 pieces of English silver, 14 examples of Scottish silver, 27 pieces of Irish silver, 4 pieces of Channel Islands silver including a very early caudle cup, 35 pieces of Continental silver dating from the late 1500s to the early 20th century and 147 mostly English caddy spoons. In addition to the silver, her gift included a small selection of antique pocket scent bottles, fine jewellery, and a gothic revival sideboard which appears in the Victorian section of the south wing of the Samuel European Galleries. In the fall of 1999, Mrs. Robertson was able to attend the opening of *Silver: The Sterling Choice*, a special exhibition selected from her generous donations. Eric Shrubsole, the New York silver dealer who had sold to the Robertsons and other Canadian collectors was among the guests. Eric was in Toronto to assess the Davis collection of silver which was ultimately sold by Christie's, New York.

Robert Morton Robertson (1901-1987) and his wife Gladys are not to be confused with Norman and Marian Robertson. Morton Robertson, the eldest son of Chief Justice Robert S. Robertson of Toronto, was an engineer. On August 29, 1934, he married Lillian Gladys Pinder (born Sheffield, England, 1908- died Cambridge, Ontario, 2004) who is described as a nurse. There does not seem to be any evidence that Morton shared Gladys' passion for collecting. Gladys had a strong personality. In Toronto collecting circles, she is best remembered for her collection of early English porcelain from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In later years, she resided in Galt (now part of Cambridge). Whenever the porcelain specialists from Christie's or Sotheby's visited Toronto, they made "pilgrimages" to visit Gladys. This ultimately came to a close towards 1990 when she began selling pieces from her collection (with the exception of a few pieces that she donated to the Gardiner Museum). Some porcelain appeared in a Christie's New York auction on 18 May, 1989. A number of her pieces were consigned to Anne George at Albert Amor in London. They appeared in the 1994 sale catalogue produced by Albert Amor entitled "Treasures from Toronto."

Gladys Robertson was collecting silver as early as the 1950s. She is noted as "Mrs. R. M. Robertson" in the alphabetical list of lenders for the *English Silver* exhibition catalogue in 1958. In the *Prized Possessions from Private Homes* catalogue (ROM, 1968), she appears again in the List of Lenders as "Mrs. R. M. Robertson." Gladys wrote the introduction "Collecting Early Silver" for the silver section, pp. 132-164, entries 650-830. Louise Hawley Stone wrote the introduction to the furniture section and Marian Hahn Adams (later Mrs. John Bradshaw), the "English Pottery and Porcelain." Gladys likely was part of committee who selected the silver. Her presence in the published catalogue suggested that she was considered to be very knowledgeable about silver. This opinion gains some credence from the Introduction to the catalogue, where Curator Heribert Hickl-Szabo describes the ROM European Department as the "coordinator of [the] exhibition," giving credit to "the help of generous friends of the Museum."

It is worth reprinting the last paragraph of Gladys' introductory essay in the catalogue, "Collecting Early Silver" (pp. 134-135) since it helps to explain her mind set when collecting. Note that antique silver was seen as an investment. That makes sense since most of these collectors worked in the business world and took investment potential into consideration:

"The serious collector of early silver receives many rewards – a constant challenge to his judgement, great beauty with quiet splendour, much of civilized history and a wide current interest – with a sure return on wise investment when, as with all fine arts, he steadfastly strives for perfection rather than profusion."

My only experience with Gladys and her silver collection occurred in 1979 when members of the Silver Society in England toured Canada to see silver. The Royal Ontario Museum was on the itinerary because of the Lee Collection. Gladys Robertson still had good connections at the ROM and was able to insist that a very temporary display of pieces from her collection be mounted in a case in the European Galleries then located on the first floor. In today's museum world, this unscheduled exhibition would be considered highly irregular and met with loud opposition from professionals in the Registration and Conservation Departments concerned about a potential security and insurance nightmare. As usual, Gladys' strong personality had its way. I recall assisting Brian Musselwhite in mounting the display. Gladys did her best to supervise us. I remember a particularly elegant large silver ewer from a toilet service of the 1690s.<sup>4</sup> The modernity of its design made a deep impression on me. Other star pieces included a pierced silver bread basket by Paul de Lamerie. There was one of the oval underplates or stands for the sauceboats in the de Lamerie service that belonged to Admiral Anson (1697-1762), George 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Anson. This service is regarded as a great achievement of the English Rococo for the 1740-50 period. Excellent as individual pieces were, Gladys' collection did not actually create a coherent look.

In the 1980s, when Murray McKay, Chief of Clan McKay, represented Christie's in Toronto, he was able to talk a number of collectors into consigning with the firm. Gladys decided to send her silver for sale at Christie's, New York, as Murray and Christie's were willing to publicize it using her name. That is often flattering for a collector. It is also possible that Gladys may have been concerned that some of her rarer pieces could possibly be stopped for export. By that time, Bill C-33 was in effect and, if important antiques had been in Canada for 35 or more years, they required an Export Permit, usually signed by a museum curator. In a few cases, these Permits were denied and enabled Canadian museums and galleries to negotiate the purchase of important art or antiques with the Minister or Heritage granting up to half of the purchase price. By selling when she did, Gladys avoided complications. But she also possibly reaped the rewards of her investments.

Some years later, an interesting footnote occurred, as a result of Gladys' sale. About 2007, Mrs. Rita Gans came to the Royal Ontario Museum with American silver scholar Ellenor Alcorn to see the

<sup>4</sup> This would appear to be the silver-gilt ewer by David Willaume, London hallmarks for 1700, "Lent anonymously" to *Prized Possessions*, no. 689, illustrated and described page. 141.

<sup>5</sup> For an account of major pieces from the Gans Collection, see Christopher Hartop, *A Noble Feast: English Silver from the Jerome and Rita Gans Collection at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts*. Richmond, Virginia: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in association with John Adamson, Cambridge, England, 2007. The de Lamerie sauceboat stand is illustrated full page, page 30, Fig. 16, Catalogue no. 20. Hartop notes (page 31) that "Interestingly, the four sauceboats acquired from de Lamerie second hand by Lord Anson in the 1740s had stands accompanying them with rococo foliage." The catalogue entry on page 73 notes that the de Lamerie service "Descended to Thomas, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Lichfield (1856-1892)." It was sold by Christie's, London, June 8, 1893, as "The Collection of Plate made for George, Lord Anson (the Celebrated Admiral) by Paul Lamerie [sic]." The stands were sold individually. The three in lots 15 to 17 were purchased by Captain Rowe and acquired by the Ganses from M. P. Levine Ltd., London, in 1986. The fourth stand, Lot 18, was purchased by Duveen and ended up with Mrs. R. M. Robertson, Cambridge, Ontario, in whose Christie's, New York sale, it was lot 429. At 10 ½ inches (26.6 cm) in length and a weight of over 22 oz. for each stand, they are large and imposing. According to the essay in *A Noble Feast*, the range of models and forms in the Anson service represented the most up to date dining practices in England in the 1740s.

European silver collection. In the late 1900s, Jerome and Rita Gans assembled a notable collection of English silver. They donated 152 pieces to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Va., in two instalments in the 1990s and 2010. Mrs. Gans told me that they were proud to possess three of underplates for the sauceboats from the Anson service. When Gladys Robertson's silver was sold by Christie's, New York, October 27, 1987, Rita and her husband simply had to buy the fourth and last underplate.<sup>5</sup> Once acquired, they ordered a new and larger specially made replacement cabinet to display all four. Whether it was early porcelain or silver, Gladys always tried to acquire important pieces.

John Emerson Langdon (1902-1981) is best known for his research on Canadian silver which culminated in his book *Canadian Silversmiths* (1966). His collecting seems to have been focussed on documentary pieces and occasional interesting examples of English silver. An Arts & Crafts silver mustard pot by Omar Ramsden and Alwyn Carr, 1904, and an English silver grater for dried ginger root were purchased by the ROM from his estate sale at D. & J. Ritchie, Toronto. After his death, John Langdon's papers and extensive research notes were deposited with the Fisher Rare Books Library where they are available to scholars. Rene Villeneuve consulted them when preparing for his recent Laurent Amiot catalogue.

**Dr. Peter Kaellgren** served as curator in the European Department at the Royal Ontario Museum from 1972 until the end of 2009. During his career, he worked on ceramics, glass, furniture, design graphics, metalwork, and increasingly focussed on silver from 1984 onwards. Dr. Kaellgren received a Ph.D. from the University of Delaware in 1987 with a doctoral dissertation on the evolution of the console table in England from the seventeenth century to c. 1800. He has lectured widely and taught courses on the history of European ceramics and glass for the University of Toronto. His articles have appeared in scholarly and popular publications. He is a member of the Silver Society (England) and founding member of the Silver Society of Canada. Upon his retirement in 2009, he was granted Curator Emeritus by the Royal Ontario Museum. Since 2012, he and his partner, the photographer John Alexander, have become increasingly involved in searching for native orchids in Canada and in documenting them.