



PRESS RELEASE

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Restoration of antique mirrored sideboard belonging to the Larios family

The Department of Environment and Heritage recently commissioned the restoration of a unique piece of antique furniture that once belonged to one of the most well known families in Gibraltar's history, the Larios.

This ornate mirrored sideboard dating from the late 1800's once adorned the dining room on the first floor of the current City Hall when it was the property of the Larios Family. The City Hall was originally constructed in 1815 by one of the Rock's leading merchants, Aaron Cardozo. Over the years the building changed hands a couple of times, being occupied by the Gibraltar Garrison Club in 1833 and becoming the Club Hotel from 1839 until 1875. It was then purchased by Pablo Antonio Larios y Tashara, one of the leading business men and property owners of the City. He was the scion of an old Castilian family who had acquired a right of residence in Gibraltar.

Larios carried out an in-depth renovation and refurbishment of his new acquisition with a new storey being added along the west face of the building, crowned with a white marble balustrade. There was extensive refurbishment, which included the dining room, situated to the south of the building; the main features of the room was the fireplace with panels of carved alabaster and a massive richly-carved sideboard.

This sideboard was subsequently moved to other premises. It was re-discovered years later in a private property in Main Street and the new owner kindly donated it to the Government via the Gibraltar Heritage Trust who were instrumental in liaising with the developers in the build up to the conservation work.

This piece is carved from walnut wood in the Victorian Rococo style (also known as Late Baroque) which was highly in fashion into the 1870s. Highly embellished furniture of this period often features themes inspired from nature such as fruits, seeds and nuts as well as Greek inspired imagery – in this case goddess-like carvings on the posts and ornamental urn finials along the top. It is likely that this piece was made to order by a cabinet maker in nearby Spain where Walnut Wood is easily available. Note the monogram 'PL' on the shield centre, top of the piece which confirms ownership of this statement piece by Pablo Larios himself.



The piece was restored by Robert Sanguinetti and took three months to complete and can be viewed in the lobby of the City Hall.

Minister John Cortes said, “We have such a rich heritage in Gibraltar. Sometimes it turns up in unexpected corners in unexpected ways. The Larios dresser is a work of art and I am so pleased that it has been so expertly restored and found its place back home in a place where it can be seen and enjoyed by all”.