

IUN

International Upire News

Vol. 2, Jul 2007

Edited by Josep Fígols



www.cercle-v.org

contacte@cercle-v.org

Catalunya (Catalonia)

Països Catalans (Catalan Nations)

Man Beats Peacock He Says Was Vampire

(AP) NEW YORK A peacock that roamed into a fast-food restaurant parking lot was attacked by man who vilified the bird as a vampire, animal-control authorities said. Beaten so fiercely that most of his tail feathers fell out, the bird was euthanized, said Richard Gentles, a spokesman for the city's Center for Animal Care and Control. "It's just unbelievable that someone would do something to a poor, defenseless animal and do it in such a cruel fashion," he said.

The peacock, a male several years old, wandered into a Staten Island Burger King parking lot and perched on a car hood Thursday morning. Charmed employees had been feeding him bread when the man appeared.

He seized the iridescent bird by the neck, hurled it to the ground and started kicking and stomping the creature, said worker Felicia Finnegan, 19.

"He was going crazy," she said.

Asked what he was doing, she said, the attacker explained, "'I'm killing a vampire!'" Employees called police, but the man ran when he saw them. Authorities were looking for the attacker, described as being in his teens or early 20s.

It was not clear how the bird made his way to the Burger King, but a Staten Island resident who raises peacocks said he had given some to a person who lives near the restaurant.

Associated Press, 1 Jul.

Proyas tapped for 'Dracula Year Zero'

Dracula is one of the most popular characters in cinema history. Ever since Bram Stoker first penned the novel in 1897, *Dracula* has been impossible to escape. Hundreds of movies reference the legendary vampire, and on Wednesday, it was announced that one more *Dracula* movie would be added to the heap.

Alex Proyas, the director behind *The Crow*, *Dark City* and *I, Robot*, has found himself a new project. Proyas has reportedly been hired by Universal Pictures to direct a *Dracula* origin movie entitled *Dracula Year Zero*. According to *Variety*, *Dracula Year Zero* will take a different look at the vampire franchise, as the story will chronicle the life of Vlad the Impaler, the Romanian royal.

The script for *Dracula Year Zero* was written by Matt Sazama and Burk Sharpless, and according to the trade publication, it was the script that drew Proyas to the project. *IGN* quoted Proyas, who said he liked the writers' "fresh take on the legend" and added that the story plays off of the feelings of horror and sympathy the viewers has for a character that "sells his soul to the Devil to save his kingdom and family."

As for the origin of the script, the writers dished to *Variety* that their were attempting to show Vlad the Impaler when he was still "alive". As well, they tried to focus on Vlad's revered status in Romania, as he held off the advancing Turkish hordes that threatened to overrun the region. "Usually when you see him, he's past his prime and 100 years old," Sazama said. Burk Sharpless added

Actress Archives, 11 Jul.

Castle fit for Dracula -- yours for \$85 million

Bran castle in Romania has no direct tie to Vlad the Impaler, but the mythic reputation of the medieval manor is drawing attention to its sale

Confiscated in 1948 by Romania's Communist regime, Bran castle was restored in the late 1980s and returned to the Habsburg family in 2006. It's now for sale, though Victoria Realtor Deedrie Ballard thinks the \$85 million price is too steep. She notes that some European castles cost less than Victoria homes these days.

Contrary to popular myth, Bran castle was not the home of Vlad Tepes, the Wallachian prince upon whom novelist Bram Stoker is supposed to have based his bloodthirsty vampire count. In fact, the 13th-century castle was built by knights of the Teutonic Order as protection from invading Ottoman Turks.

Bran Castle, which cleaves to a steep cliff that towers above a medieval village in Romania, is up for sale for a bloodcurdling \$85 million.

Why? Castles don't normally fetch such top dollars these days, but a curious modern mythology has turned this property into a Dracula draw.

"It's a nice, normal, medieval castle that any royal family would be happy to live in -- with nice views of the valley," says Dracula expert Elizabeth Miller, in an interview from Toronto.

"But it has nothing to do with Dracula," says Miller, who has visited Transylvania nine times, written six books and dozens of articles on the fantastical creature, and lectured widely on the subject throughout Europe and North America.

In recent years, she says, a fiction of gothic proportions has come to cloak the castle, which in fact has no connection to the supernatural horror novel written by Bram Stoker in 1897 -- except it does rise majestically from forests in the foothills of the Carpathian mountains, and was used as the background in a Dracula film once.

People flock to it like bats to a dark cave, thanks to the blood-dipped marketing strategy employed by the Romanian government, which implies Vlad the Impaler, upon whom the novel was supposedly based, once lived there. It's all "hogwash," says Miller.

The truth is, the castle was originally built by knights of the Teutonic Order as protection from invading Ottoman Turks in 1212. After partially burning down, it was rebuilt in stone, in 1377, by a Hungarian king and later became home to Queen

Victoria's granddaughter, Queen Marie of Romania, and then her daughter Princess Ileana.

Confiscated in 1948 by the Communist regime, it was later restored, dubbed Dracula's Castle and turned into a museum and tourist attraction. Last May it was returned to Princess Ileana's son, the Archduke Dominic von Habsburg, a 70-year-old industrial designer who offered the Transylvanian tourist trap to local authorities for \$85 million. They declined, and he is now open to offers from those he hopes will respect and honour its real historical significance.

"I wouldn't pay anything to go into Dracula's castle, let alone buy it," says Victoria Re/Max Camosun Realtor Deedrie Ballard, who believes the price is steep even if the walls are more than three metres thick in places.

She says there are lots of European castles for sale these days. A tempting little chateau in France can be had for \$1.6 million, a pleasant-looking 17th-century manor is for sale in Ukraine for about \$1 million, a historic castle in Chianti, near Siena, is offered at a heftier \$17 million, while another near the sea in Portugal can be had for \$16 million.

Ballard, who recently sold a house overlooking Juan de Fuca Strait for \$5.5 million, points out some European castles cost less than Victoria homes these days. "If I had those kinds of millions, I would buy something nice in Tuscany or Florence," she says.

The Transylvania castle is pricier because it has an income stream derived from more than 450,000 people who beat a path to its door every year.

"A lot of people in the village derive their income from visitors to the castle where they sell pictures of Vlad the Impaler with fangs," says Miller. The castle store sells Dracula baseball caps, seals, T-shirts, calendars, mouse pads, coasters, mugs and tote bags.

Miller curls her lip at all these fantasies and notes Vlad was indeed a 15th-century warlord in the region, but there is no evidence he spent a single night at the castle, let alone lived there, or was even chained up in the basement. The only connection with bad old Vlad is his last name.

She explains that, when Stoker began researching his novel in 1890, he planned to call his central character Count Wampyr, but while visiting Whitby in Northern England, he came across a book that mentioned a man called Vlad Dracula who waged war with the Turks. Stoker decided to use that name instead for his central character.

"Stoker certainly didn't base his character on him, he just used the name. Sometimes I laugh about all this, sometimes I get irritated," sighs Miller, who just finished co-editing an edition of Bram Stoker's notes. "Nobody wants to do any research these days. They just look at what's been said and continue the misinformation until it becomes 'fact.' Take all that speculation away and you are left with just another European castle."

Even the archduke, reached at his home in Salem, New York, can't explain the modern fantasy. "I lived there until I was 10 and we knew nothing about Dracula. The castle was used as a backdrop for *The Son of Dracula*, I believe, and I suppose that catches the imagination. But in our day, there were no ties to Dracula whatsoever. I guess people have fun with it -- and it certainly adds to the value -- but I don't feel warmly toward it. Vlad was considered a hero in Romania."

Von Habsburg says it became a Dracula spectacular in the 1950s, after his family left. "Before that, it was our summer residence. It was in perfect order and fully furnished until 1948, and then came 50 years of neglect and looting."

He says there is much misinformation swirling round Bran Castle. "There is no dungeon, no labyrinth of passages underneath," although Queen Maria did install an elevator in an old well shaft so she could travel up and down in her wheelchair, and a tunnel was dug from the bottom of it to her tea house.

"The castle sits on a rock like one imagines a fairy tale castle should, and is quite beautiful. My room was in the central high tower, overlooking the plains and a mountain. By the way the clouds hung on that mountain, whether [like a] hat or halo, I could predict the weather, rain or sunshine."

After restitution last year, the archduke had no thoughts of ever living in the castle again. "It's the kind of thing you dream of but you cannot turn back time. A whole way of life was taken away and cannot be returned. My objective now is to find a buyer who will keep it in the spirit we had it, so it will remain a symbol of things that are good in the country. This castle is steeped in critical events of European history dating from the 13th century to the present."

And a little Gothic romance doesn't hurt.

Dracula myth draws interest in property

Bran castle looks romantic and charming, but Michael Gardner, who is handling its sale, says the mystique that surrounds it is attracting some unwanted attention.

"The cranks are coming out of the woodwork," said the chairman of Baytree Capital, in an interview from New York. "People have told me I must sell them the property or be cursed forever, that kind of thing. To be honest, a lot of interest has not been particularly credible, although there is some [serious interest], but everything has happened much too fast."

He was retained one week ago and doesn't even have room measurements or other specifics yet. Gardner plans to visit the site in a couple of weeks and create a strategic development plan.

Is he a specialist in castle sales?

"Anything but, although I do love unique things and this structure is unique and majestic. It's located in the perfect place, with an international airport less than 20 minutes away, ski country nearby, new roads going in ... I've done deals 20 times this size and nobody noticed, but the Dracula myth has created enormous appeal."

He notes a park around the castle could easily be developed without affecting the view, and museum entrance is nominal right now, about \$3 or \$5 Euros. The restitution agreement calls for the castle to continue as a museum for at least two more years, while the owner receives rent.

Gardner stressed he is not treating the property as a real estate transaction, but as a business and building one. "The last thing Dominic (the owner) wants is talk of blood dripping off swords. He wants something elegant developed there, a spa, a hotel, even gambling perhaps. Not something goth and ugly. The building has such an interesting history."

The property includes two houses - Queen Mary's tea house and Princess Ileana's house - plus a medieval customs building, where the family lived in winter when the castle was difficult to heat, stables, garage and maintenance shop.

Grania Litwin
Times Colonist, 18 Jul.

A vampire on the streets of Bucharest

We are informed from Bucharest, that a fear exists in the city caused by the mass complaints of various young ladies, who are attacked by a secretive vampire. At first, he silences his victims with a mighty blow. Then he makes a small incision in the shoulder from which he sucks blood. Having seen sated with blood, the vampire then diligently cleans the wound with iodine and applies a bandage. Despite all the police work, this secretive vampire has not been found yet.

The Borgo Post, Vol 12, Issue 3
