



Sarah Brooks/RECORDER staff

From the left: Movie crew member Tom Moser, crew member Joel Moser, armory owner Susan Phemister, independent film maker Dawn Westlake, and actor Davide del Degan pose at the armory Wednesday while making a movie in the city.

City armory hosts movie crew

By SARAH BROOKS
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In the spirit of the rich Italian culture that is associated with Amsterdam's South Side, a short film featuring an Italian hotel in its story line was recently shot and produced at the armory on Florida Avenue.

The armory was also used in other shots, including a staged jail cell in the basement and a prison interview scene set in one of the castle's turrets.

Susan and Manfred Phemister moved into the former National Guard Armory late last year, after having lived in New York City for about five years. The couple purchased the lot, referred to then as Diana's Cas-

tle after its former owners, on e-Bay.

Susan said she and her husband have been renovating for nine months now.

After distributing an e-mail to family and friends about the new purchase, Susan said she caught the attention of a childhood friend who was also an independent film producer — Los Angeles resident Dawn Westlake.

The two grew up in Wheaton, Ill.

"She went to film school and we parted ways," Susan said.

After receiving the e-mail, Westlake called Susan to say she needed a castle based in Northern Italy for her next

film, which included scenes of a jail cell and an Italian Inn.

"They had it all," Westlake said Wednesday afternoon at the armory.

The film, entitled *God's Good Pleasure*, is a love story between an escaped Italian serial killer and a vacationing CIA agent, according to Westlake. The castle, or inn as it is in the movie, is a place where the two meet in privacy.

Both of the Phemisters have small parts in the production. Susan plays the blind innkeeper who is oblivious of the secret between the two main characters, and her husband plays an Italian police officer.

Brought in as a production

assistant was the son of the castle's former owners, Abraham Diana. Westlake said he was handy in locating props within the castle when they were needed.

"How many people get to say 'Hey, I used to live there and they shot a movie there,'" Diana said.

He said his family lived there from November 1994 to September 2005. He has frequently helped the Phemisters since they moved in.

The armory was perfect, Westlake said, because of its proximity to local stores and its

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ability to be used in a variety of scenes.

The basement, which Susan's husband has turned into a storage area for his online CD distribution company, used to be a storage area for weapons. Westlake was able to film a scene in a jail cell — complete with bars — in one of the storage areas.

A prison interview scene was filmed in one of the castle's two turrets which was decorated with paintings intended to have been done by the prisoner. Westlake it looked like a typical Italian jail cell.

"Everyone asks what we do up here," Susan said of the empty tower. "No one goes up here."

Outside the castle, Westlake filmed one of her scenes as the love-stricken character climbed up the wall to the balcony to meet her counterpart played by

actor/director Davide del Degan. Westlake said she only climbed "a bit" of the 15 fee — then used a ladder for the rest.

A love scene was also shot in the guest wing of the castle and a lobby scene was shot in the Kennedy Room, which is now the Phemisters' living room.

Besides a forest location that was shot in Clarksville, Allegany County, all of the scenes were shot on the armory premises.

Westlake anticipates the English/Italian film to be ready by June with a world premier in Italy in October. This will be her fifth film with collaborators Tom and Joel Moser, also from Los Angeles.

"With the other films we had great luck getting them all over the states," she said. "It would be great to have a special screening here."