



GENTLEMAN COLLECTORS: WHISNANT GALLERIES FRENCH QUARTER, NEW ORLEANS

Functioning as both an emporium of antiques and a haven of curiosities for nearly fifty years, Whisnant Galleries had Royal Street panache with its Florentine marble sculptures, Georgian furniture, and French chandeliers. However, just as the gallery sidestepped Royal Street by one block (it was located on Chartres Street near Bienville), the Whisnant inventory veered toward a more eclectic fare. Among startling discoveries, one might find an 18th century Mughal princess' necklace, a fully operational Dutch tenth-scale carrousel, or what appeared to be an Amazonian shrunken head. All visitors left with a story of something they had never seen before.

A second-generation New Orleans antiquarian, Thomas "Pete" Whisnant (1934-2015) had a foreign service career with posts in Turkey and Libya during the Eisenhower administration. He then traveled in South America and hosted "Wild Cargo," a wildlife show on New Orleans television before opening an antique shop in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. In 1968, Whisnant met Felix Landry, a young protege who became the business partner and friend to handle the many financial and logistical challenges of a successful New Orleans gallery for the next 49 years. While the gallery was born of Pete's heart and mind, it was sustained by Felix's nerve and muscle.

Following the tradition of a gentleman's "Cabinet of Curiosities" or "Gallery of Wonders," Pete and Felix sought things to learn about (natural history finds, ethnographic objects, and arms and armor) to mix with the furniture and paintings more typical of a French Quarter antique shop. Eschewing the formality of a traditional antique store to focus on what was fascinating to them, Pete and Felix were always generous with their time to talk to and educate any interested visitors.

Moreover, Pete and Felix delighted in their collection and loved living with antiques. While the showroom floor was always well-stocked, special objects were kept in their private residences among their collections of living wonders (notably pet tortoises, pythons, birds for Pete, and dogs for Felix and his wife Rosa). Neal Auction Company is delighted to offer some of these special objects from the Whisnant-Landry Collection.

