



One of the rare pieces of the porcelain collection in Trenton, Tennessee. It is a square, lithophane, all white with gilded lines, gold spout, handle and crescent finial on pot; ship with port behind it in relief on one panel, two cows on opposite panel; rosettes in the end panels. It was purchased in Vienna.

Photo: Courtesy of the Greater Gibson County Chamber of Commerce, Trenton, Tennessee.

A RARE PORCELAIN COLLECTION IN TRENTON, TENNESSEE

The World's largest collection consisting of five hundred and twenty-five porcelain **Veilleuse-theieres** (night-light-teapots) can be found on exhibit in the Municipal Building in Trenton, Tennessee. These pieces were collected over a period of thirty-five years from various countries and date from 1750 to 1860.

The collection belonged to Dr. Frederick C. Freed (11/7/89-2/4/76), a native of Trenton. He was a clinical professor at New York University's School of Obstetrics and Gynecology. He also maintained a private medical practice in New York City for forty years.

His brother, Sylvane Freed, is probably responsible for giving him the idea of donating this priceless collection to his native city. It is said that while he was visiting in Trenton, he and his brother discussed the disposition of the teapot collection. He had supposed he would offer it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and surely, it would be interested since its collection consisted, at that time, of a single **veilleuse**. His brother, then, gave him the idea of donating what is known as the Freed Collection to Trenton. In 1955, Dr. Freed gave the teapots to that city and they arrived over a period of years. They were initially displayed in special glass lined cases in the lobby of the Peabody High School Auditorium. In 1962, a new municipal building was constructed, and Dr. Freed had special display cases made to permanently house his valuable treasures in the city council chambers.

In the eighteenth century, "potteries" in England and Europe began producing a vessel for convenient bedside heating of soup or porridge in a sick-room or nursery. The earliest models consisted simply of a warming bowl resting on top of a round or square hollow pedestal containing a shallow dish of oil in which a wick was floated. When lighted, the flame not only warmed the contents of the bowl above, but also shone through the translucent sides of the pedestal, providing a soft night light. Later the teapot replaced the bowl and more ornate models were produced. These had scenes on the pedestal such as Romeo serenading Juliet on her balcony, woodchoppers and ice skaters warming themselves around a roaring fire.

Almost all of the teapots in the Freed Collection were produced in France in the nineteenth century. They were designed in a wide variety of forms representing buildings such as cathedrals, castles, or houses in which the second story might form the teapot. Another group took the form of humans or animals that concealed that they were teapots on pedestals. The upper half of the figure constitutes the pot and the lower half the pedestal. More than one hundred and thirty of these personages are represented in the collection.

A "teapot festival" has been held each year since 1981, to focus attention on this magnificent collection. It has grown into a two week event beginning

the first Sunday in May, when at the opening ceremony, there is a lighting of the teapots.

The Municipal Building in Trenton is open from 9 am to 5 pm daily. If you should want to see the exhibit at another time, when the building is closed, a member of the Fire Department, which is next door, will be happy to open the building.