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The Lost Archive of a French Quarter Photographer

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THE LOST ARCHIVE OF A FRENCH QUARTER PHOTOGRAPHER

by

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A Research Paper

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CHAPTER 1: ABOUT THE PROJECT

On a trip to New Orleans in 2008, I learned who Pops Whitesell was. A good friend of mine, Adam Shipley was managing Preservation Hall and the Preservation Hall Jazz Band. Adam was working closely with the Hall's owner, Ben Jaffe, son of Susan and Alan Jaffe, the original owners and operators of the nightclub. Ben had shown Adam some of the Whitesell negatives, and Adam thought of me.

In 1961 when the Jaffes purchased the Hall, they acquired Whitesell's negative collection as part of the estate, along with his equipment and enlargers. In the 1970s, the Jaffes donated a large portion of the negatives to Tulane University's special collections department. Despite the significant donation, more than 4000 Whitesell negatives remained upstairs in the storage room at the Hall until after Katrina. After the storm, the negatives were moved to a climate-controlled storage unit. Despite the relocation, the negatives needed organized and preserved. The images on the glass were fading quickly as mold and mildew ate away at the emulsion.

My graduate project for Southern Illinois University grew out of the need to research and preserve this collection of old negatives. To that end, I scanned each of the negatives on a flatbed scanner as high-resolution TIFF images in the manner prescribed by photo archivists. I also scanned numerous letters and correspondents to and from Whitesell, which were found in an old cardboard box in the storage unit in New Orleans. I estimate that the scanning took about 200 hours. My goal is to use these scans to share Whitesell's work with the public via online museum, which will be housed at: www.popswhitesell.com.

For my research, I visited Tulane's Howard-Tilton library many times and studied their Whitesell collection. The majority of negatives in the collection are in a state of deterioration, much like the private collection. The majority of negatives at Tulane are portraits. Also, many of the negatives have not been processed into the library's system since their donation 31 years ago. Other libraries and research facilities I visited include the Historic New Orleans Collection and the Louisiana State Museum. I spoke with Mary Markey at the Smithsonian Institute where Whitesell had a one-man exhibit in 1946. She confirms via email dated March 26, 2009 that Whitesell indeed exhibited there but no information remains about the specific images he exhibited.

Interviews were an important part of my research. I interviewed Ben Jaffe about the collection. While he knew little about Whitesell, he was a wealth of information about the Hall's history. I interviewed John Whitesell, Pops' very distant relative, but adamant family historian. Finally, I interviewed Gypsy Lou Webb. She was an artist and beat poet publisher in the French Quarter in the 1950s. I found a negative in the Jaffe collection labeled "photo by Gypsy Lou," which brought me to the 97-year-old woman who lives in Slidell, a suburb of New Orleans. Of the three interviews, John Whitesell's was the most informative, but primarily served as confirmation for what I had already learned about Whitesell. Gypsy Lou, on the other hand, provided a very interesting look at the French Quarter during Whitesell's time, although she knew very little about the man himself.

In the end, I hope to create a community discussion about Whitesell online, thru the website. Along with my chair, Jan Roddy, I hope to publish a book of Whitesell's work – specifically work found in the Jaffe collection. Finally, I hope my research efforts have

left the Jaffe's with an organized and informative collection of Pops Whitesell's work that can now be shared with a greater audience.

CHAPTER TWO: INTRODUCTION

Hurricane Katrina, a natural disaster turned national tragedy was a defining moment for the city of New Orleans, and the country. A *New York Times* editorial published December 11, 2005 warned the "Death of an American City." Suffering because of racial disparity and economic depravation were made worse by a slow and inept government response. Even to New Orleanians familiar with inequality, it was unthinkable that nearly a week past before aid reached the city's displaced people. Eighteen hundred people died.

Preservation of culture and restoration of infrastructure were at the forefront of the recovery effort. Five years after Katrina, New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu greeted the city with optimism. At the city's official anniversary event, he told the audience, "We are not rebuilding the city that was; we are rebuilding the city that is to be." The *Times-Picayune* reported that the commemoration turned into a joyous celebration of New Orleans culture (Nolan, 2010). Despite the city's comeback, there are serious flaws with some of the recovery efforts. Recovery, in many cases, has depended on wealth, race and status (Nolan, 2010). However, a Kaiser Family Foundation study revealed that an overwhelming majority of New Orleanians were not only optimistic about recovery, but believed the city was moving in the right direction (Pope, 2010).

From the beginning of the recovery effort, it was acknowledged that the city of New Orleans contributes a unique culture to the American experience. To many, it was that unique culture made it a city worth saving. New Orleans' cultural exports – from Mardi Gras to jazz music – gave the world tangible evidence of its importance. In one twist-of-

fate incident, the Katrina cleanup unearthed a lost piece of New Orleans' history – a set of important cultural artifacts. In the French Quarter, at 726 St. Peter - the site of the well-known jazz venue, Preservation Hall - a collection of old, glass negatives was discovered. After the storm in 2005, a damaged roof at the Hall needed repair. In the process, 4,000 glass negatives that had been exposed to the elements were uncovered.

In 1961, Sandra and Alan Jaffe turned the building into a music hall where jazz could thrive. Rock and roll was taking over the American music scene, and the Jaffe's wanted to provide an outlet for New Orleans' own creation – jazz. Before the Jaffe's purchased the Hall, it had been the working studio and home of photographer, Joseph Woodson "Pops" Whitesell. When he died in 1958, he left behind thousands of negatives that would only surface in the aftermath of Katrina.

Preservation and restoration in an earlier age

In December 1919, *Times-Picayune* author Lyle Saxon wrote, "Last night the heart of the old French Quarter stopped beating" (Tallant, 1950, p.308). A fire had destroyed the old Opera House in New Orleans' French Quarter. To many the blaze signaled an end to the uniqueness of French Quarter culture. The Opera House was the first in America, a social hub for Creole society, and was highly romanticized by early preservationists (Stanonis, 2006). Social historians considered the burning of the Old French Opera House the "final nail" in the coffin of the existence of Creole culture in the Quarter (Stanonis, 2006, p.144). They felt that New Orleans was growing mundane as historic buildings burnt to the ground and others were bulldozed to make room for modern homogenous buildings. Many wondered what would distinguish New Orleans from all other American cities.

Unfortunately, some preservationists masked segregationist motives in the growing conservation movement. Low property values drew poor people, immigrants, speakeasies and prostitution to the Quarter, threatening a perceived elite Quarter culture. Decaying buildings were used as symbols for decaying (white) culture (Stanonis, 2006, ch. 4). The definition of Creole at the time was coded with the politics of race. Whites asserted that Creoles were only descended from the city's French and Spanish settlers, but light-skinned black Creoles challenged their notions of "racial purity." Saxon defined Creoles as those with pure, white blood. So, for some, preserving the Opera House was seen as a way to preserve whiteness in the French Quarter.[i] The notion of New Orleans being restored as a "white city" would resurface more than 80 years later in the post-Katrina clean up. A few months after the storm, then-mayor Ray Nagin, expressed his concern that post-Katrina demographics would reflect a whiter city in his famed and controversial "chocolate city" speech.

Still, some of the early preservationists had more altruistic motives. One example was photographer Arnold Genthe, best known for his images of San Francisco, particularly of Chinatown and the 1906 earthquake. He was moved to make images of New Orleans when he read that historical buildings were being demolished to create the inroads of modern business life, destroying what was beautiful and picturesque (Genthe, 1926, p. 24). Other prominent New Orleanians and artist-transplants from across the country settled in the French Quarter with intent to prove by example, that the area was becoming socioeconomically and racially diverse and that this was a good thing. Among these who lived or sojourned in the French Quarter during this time period were playwright Tennessee Williams, author William Faulkner, architect-silversmith William Spratling,

author Lyle Saxon, and journalists Roark Bradford and Natalie Scott. A significant number expatriated from the Midwest. In particular, novelist Sherwood Anderson from Ohio, Indiana-born painter Wayman Adams, author Sinclair Lewis from Minnesota, and Alberta Kinsey, a painter from Ohio, and of course, Pops Whitesell from Indiana, all found creative inspiration in New Orleans. Along with others, they formed the core of a new French Quarter bohemia. The Vieux Carré Commission's website reads, "The presence of these artists and writers stimulated a cultural renaissance of a sort in the quarter, and their adopted neighborhood inspired their work." These artist transplants wrote about New Orleans in a way that fascinated readers and helped to turn the French Quarter into an alluring tourist attraction (Stanonis, 2006). This was the growing scene of artists and preservationists in the French Quarter when Whitesell arrived in 1918.

CHAPTER 3: WHITESELL'S LIFE

Early life

Whitesell was born into a small, pioneering family near Terre Haute, Indiana in 1876 - the oldest of three siblings. Whitesell's parents were farmers and some family members also had investments in limestone quarries. Whitesell however, always had an affinity for the arts. As a child, he wanted to be a painter but abandoned the brush for a camera as a teenager because he lacked the money for art training. Before long, Whitesell was working as a negative retoucher for a local Terre Haute photographer. As a young man he placed an ad in the *St. Louis and Canadian Photographer*, which brought him his first photography job away from home (Peterson, 1991).

By the time Whitesell had reached the age of thirty, he left Indiana for Illinois to continue his career as a professional photographer. Whitesell moved from Charleston, to Mattoon, to Alton. His longest stop over was likely in Charleston, Illinois, where he worked as a portrait photographer with W.H. Wiseman. During this period, Whitesell took an image of Billy Sunday, an influential American evangelist preacher, that was published in a local newspaper. It was a period known for its evangelical fervor, referred to as the Third Great Awakening (McLoughlin, 1978). This was likely one of Whitesell's first published pictures. Whitesell also documented the aftermath of a tornado that completely destroyed Mattoon, IL in 1917. The tornado killed more than 100 people and wiped out homes and farms across the region. Whitesell's negatives of the tornado destruction read, "Mattoon, the year I left." It is unclear if Whitesell lost property in the storm, or if he left because of it. Whitesell's primary photographic work during this time, however, was portrait work.

Very little beyond this is known about Whitesell's early life. Once he became an established photographer in New Orleans, he rarely mentioned his days as a young boy growing up on the banks of the Wabash River in central Indiana. Personal letters indicate that Whitesell received an offer to work for Hitchler's studio in New Orleans around 1916. Initially he declined – he had just purchased his own studio in Illinois. But in December 1917, Whitesell wrote Hitchler, having reconsidered. After over 40 years of living in the Midwest, Whitesell packed up and left. Draft registration documents indicate that by September 12, 1918, the day Whitesell registered for the draft, he was 42, living in New Orleans, and working as a portrait photographer.

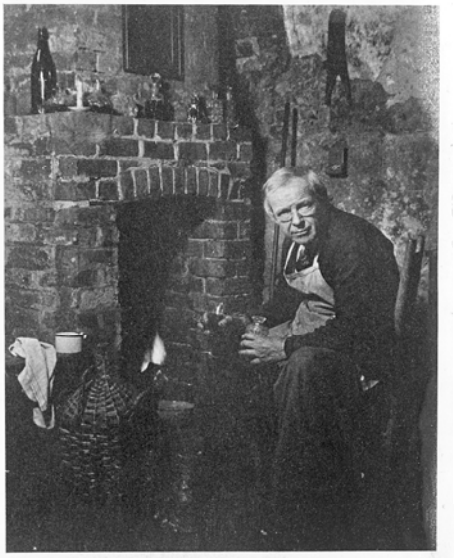
At home in the French Quarter

After only a few short years in the Quarter, Whitesell found himself at the center of the growing "bohemia." It wasn't Whitesell's photographs alone that would bring him recognition, but also his notoriety as a real "French Quarter Character" (Wonk, 1981.) A 1957 *Times-Picayune* article about Whitesell said, "For many years a familiar sight in the French Quarter … a tiny, elf-like man. Stoop shouldered and casually dressed, his bright eyes peered from a face framed with a nimbus of white hair" (Collier, 1957). In other reports, he was simply known as the "St. Peter Street Leprechaun" (Taylor, 1948).

Whitesell's quirks were not limited to his appearance. He was a tinkerer, creating and manipulating every device in his home - from his cameras to his toilet, which worked on a system of rigs and pulleys. "I like to feel that I am independent," he said, "So many complexities confuse the lives of most people today; plumbers, electricians, radios, washing machines, and refrigerators. And, I have in a way had to be independent, for I have always been too busy trying to improve my pictures to have time to earn much

money" (Taylor, 1948). Unconcerned with money, and unable to afford many of the luxuries he called "confusing," Whitesell instead built his own contraptions.

On one occasion, when it was raining, a friend stopped by to visit Whitesell and noticed that he had taken all the goldfish out of his patio pond and placed them in a bowl in his kitchen. Whitesell simply explained that it was raining. The author Erle Stanley Gardner, best known as author of the Perry Mason novels, based his character Gramps Wiggins on Whitesell in *The Case of the Smoking Chimney* and *The Case of the Turning Tide.* A copy of the back flap of the book provides some context for Gardner's attraction to Whitesell's personality as the basis for a character.



WOOD WHITESELL *of New Orleans*
—the man who perhaps inspired Erle Stanley Gardner to create the character of Gramps Wiggins. Mr. Gardner tells about it in his foreword to this book.

Figure 1

Despite his idiosyncrasies, and maybe because of them, Whitesell's studio and much-loved courtyard was host to hundreds of guests and strangers who stopped by to visit the well-known French Quarter character. A visitor recalled that Whitesell's lush patio was, "Always cluttered with an incredible array of photographs and boxes and magazines and

gadgets – and, of course, innumerable friends" (Pitts, 1978, p. 4). Whitesell told a reporter that he would rather talk with people than do anything else in the world. Whitesell had fallen in love with New Orleans, his courtyard home and the camaraderie of his large circle of friends. "We're not making any money, but we're living the life of Riley. We're having a wonderful time," he said (Dugas, 1944).

Whitesell took hundreds of pictures of the courtyard – some with people, and many without. Many of his casual photographs with friends were taken there. Below is an example of such a portrait, taken with his closest friend, meteorologist, Dr. Isaac Cline.[ii] Whitesell is in the center, and Cline is on the left.

Figure 2

In the far right corner, this image above reveals the remote control camera shutter release cord that Whitesell became famous for. Whitesell would use this cord to include himself in many of his photographs. In later years, when Whitesell began to enter his

pictures in competitions, photography judges made a game of finding “Whitesell’s rope” in the images (M.F.C., 1948).

Bohemian camaraderie

Whitesell quickly became friends with the artists and writers that made up the so-called French Quarter bohemia. Images of these individuals can be found fixed on a number of his glass plate negatives. Lyle Saxon said of him, “We all love Whitesell. He’s so terribly good to all of us, generous with his time and his talents. If I were so impoverished to be limited to one word in describing Pops, I’d say he’s durable. Others have come and gone. Pops remains” (Dugas, 1944). When William Faulkner and William Spratling collaborated on a book of character sketches, *Sherwood Anderson and Other Famous Creoles*, first published in 1926, Pops Whitesell was among the 42 artists and writers presented. Above the illustration of Whitesell, the authors wrote, “Mr. Whitesell, the Royal Street Photographer.”

Figure 3

Indeed, Whitesell was central to a group of creative minds that helped define the culture of the French Quarter during his time. Whitesell said of these friends, “I have never had worldly wealth, but all the money in the world could not buy one of the thousands of friends who come to see my pictures and patio during the year” (Taylor, 1948).

Some of these friends – Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Wayman Adams and Alberta Kinsey - were also expatriates from the Midwest. Authors Sherwood Anderson and Sinclair Lewis were famous for literature that rebuked the traditional values of their Midwestern upbringing. These men are most known for their cutting satire of bucolic and puritanical American values. Anderson left his wife, three children and job as President of Anderson Manufacturing in Ohio to become a traveled author. His personal rejection of middleclass position and accomplishment along with the traditional, nuclear family garnered praise from authors and artists around the country, and in New Orleans (Anderson, 1977). Sinclair Lewis, although he only stayed in New Orleans a short time, was outspoken in his distaste for American-brand capitalism. In 1930, when Lewis became the first US citizen to win a Nobel Prize in Literature, he addressed the Academy saying, "In America most of us — are still afraid of any literature which is not a glorification of everything American … ” (Van Doren, 1933). Lewis spoke about a literary issue, but counterculture ideas like his, united and defined the small New Orleans bohemian group of artists and authors.

John Whitesell, a distant cousin and family historian, speculates that Pops Whitesell found solace in French-Quarter-kinships with like-minded individuals because he had also abandoned the Midwest and its attendant values. He believes Pops Whitesell was

struggling to align an aspect of his life with the early 20th century hegemony – that he was homosexual (J. Whitesell, personal communication, March 29, 2009). This remains speculation based on the fact that he was never married, had openly gay acquaintances and was estranged from his family. When the question of Whitesell's romantic life was raised to beat poet publisher, Gypsy Lou Webb, who was Whitesell's neighbor on St. Peter St., she said, "Hell. Girlfriends, boyfriends – who knows?" (L. Webb, personal communication, June 3, 2009). This response reflects the general lassie-faire attitude of the French Quarter, which strikes at the heart of its appeal. When a reporter for the *New Orleans Item* interviewed Whitesell in 1957, they inquired why he had never married. "I was always too busy," he responded, "I am wedded to my camera" (Drezinksi, 1957). Still, neighbors like Gypsy Lou were not preoccupied with Whitesell's personal life. Whitesell likely felt free in New Orleans to live –however he pleased. The Vieux Carré Commission describes the Quarter's attraction this way: "This sensually pleasant and socially tolerant place provided the art colony with an easy timelessness, raw material to feed creativity, and, above all, camaraderie" (Irvin, n.d.).

While Whitesell's friendships flourished, his family became estranged. They would make numerous unanswered attempts to communicate with him once he moved to New Orleans. An article in *Dixie* recalled, "Pops never did like to discuss his early days, even with close friends. He gave the impression he was generally on the outs with his family" (Wonk, 1981). Whitesell's personal letters also bear evidence to the fact that he was estranged from his family in Indiana. In 1957, Whitesell said, "It's foolish for my brother to write me. He wants me to leave my camera" (Drezinski, 1957). His sister Anna wrote to him many times and often expressed her frustration at a lack of reciprocated response.

In a letter dated January 21, 1941, she wrote, “I wonder if there is any Wood (another of Pops’ nicknames) to write to but I shall try it out. If this is not answered I shall call it closed and consider you dead and buried. For all you know, I may have been.”[iii] It is not clear if Whitesell ever returned home for his mother or father’s funerals.

If Whitesell were trying to lay his Midwest past to rest, his famous photographs would have been a constant reminder of the life he left behind. Many of his most exhibited photographs are of his family back in Indiana, taken before his exodus to New Orleans, including the one below, “Hoosier Pioneers.”

Figure 4

On note cards archived at the Louisiana State Museum, Whitesell wrote that “Hoosier Pioneers” is an image of a “Farm women’s club known as the Willing Workers Club. They meet once a month and do something for a needy member. My mother and father’s sister are on the left.”

Salon exhibiting

In 1942, when he was into his 60’s, Whitesell embarked on his personal mission to become one of the best salon circuit photographers in the world. Salon photography was

a popular form of exhibition at the time. Photographers submitted prints for judging and display in galleries, or salons, all over the world. The Photographic Society of America (PSA) hosted many competitions and would award points to winning images. Points were given based on exhibition so a print that had been accepted and hung several times throughout the year, around the country, would collect many points for the photographer. Photographers that collected the largest number of points would become the top salon photographers in America, and for those who entered international competitions, the world (Peterson, 1997). In less than year, Whitesell rose to become the fourth highest ranked salon photographer in the United States and Canada. In a five-year period, 474 prints hung in 184 salons. *Margaret Holds the Floor* (below) hung 51 times in the first year of Whitesell's salon exhibitions. Afterwards many institutions, like the Chicago Historical Society and the Brooklyn Museum, sought the print for their permanent collections.

Figure 5

In his move to become number one, however, Whitesell neglected his portrait work, which brought in most of his revenue (Ireland, 1950). Whitesell, who had been rather

unconcerned with money and appearance before, was entering old age as a very accomplished salon photographer but one unprepared for the financial demands and physical restrictions of old age.

Whitesell continued to entertain artists and friends on his patio but his growing recognition drew him away from the French Quarter and into a life of lecturing and presentation. In 1949 the Professional Photographers Association gave Whitesell their highest degree - "Master Photographer" and the Photographic Society of America (PSA) made him a fellow. That same year, Whitesell gave a demonstration on pictorial group photography to the PSA in St. Louis. Neatly packaged and tucked away among the boxes of negatives found at Preservation Hall, was a group of glass negatives that Whitesell had set aside for the lecture. *Demonstrating Angle Shots* (below) was one of those images. Whitesell is at the center, presumably demonstrating how to take angle shots. Several people featured in this photograph were members of the Whitesell-New Orleans Group of International Photographic Salon Exhibitors, a group to whom Whitesell was the mentor.

Figure 6

The following year, in 1950, the PSA sent Whitesell on a lecturing tour that would bring him to 22 cities over three months. Letters poured into the little studio on St. Peter asking for Whitesell's presence at gatherings and exhibits all over the country. Whitesell, who had a 100-year old lithographic press, used it almost obsessively to make duplicates of his pictures and copy newspaper articles about himself and important letters onto glass. As a result, evidence of Whitesell's rising career were left behind at Preservation Hall along with his old cameras and dark room equipment. Perhaps Whitesell's greatest accomplishment is told on a small glass plate from 1945. A letter from A.J. Olmsted, curator of photography for the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. asked for up to 60 of Whitesell's prints for a one man show for the month of May, 1946.

Final years

As Whitesell reached his 70s, he continued to work in his studio in the French Quarter, occasionally traveling around the country to share his images and expertise. Many of his old, artist friends had moved away from New Orleans or died. However, some new kinships were formed in Whitesell's old age. Among these new friends was Frances Benjamin Johnston, a well-known political and architectural photographer. Below is a picture of Whitesell with Johnston in a French Quarter courtyard.

Figure 7

As Whitesell grew older, he became more eccentric. He became engrossed with his salon career and neglected much of his commissioned and portraiture work. Many important clients became disgruntled as work took Whitesell months to turn around. Still, many stuck with him and even became willing benefactors once his health began to decline (Wonk, 1981). A *Times-Picayune* article from 1957, titled "Friends in Need … for 'Pops'" announced a print sale that would go to benefit the aging and crippled artist. "He has a tiny pension but not enough to live on. His friends raised $2000 for him several years ago, but that has all gone," the article reads (Collier, 1957).

Around 1953, Whitesell developed a sore on his leg. He became addicted to pain pills (aspirin). Having read in a magazine that teenagers were curing acne with sandpaper, Whitesell, with a healthy fear of doctors, purchased number two sandpaper and began sanding the sore on his leg. Whitesell sanded until his leg became grossly infected and in need of dire medical attention. A nurse came to the studio for a portrait, noticed the leg

and saw that Whitesell was nearly unconscious. Whitesell was admitted to Charity Hospital in New Orleans where his leg was amputated above the knee (Wonk, 1981). When a friend visited him in the hospital, Whitesell commented, “It was my own damn dumbness I lost it.”

Whitesell quickly deteriorated after his leg was amputated. He was confined to a wheelchair and although friends had come together to purchase him a prosthetic leg, he had tinkered with it as well, chipping away at it to the point of ruin. Whitesell died in 1958 at the age of 82. He had lived the last few years of his life very meagerly; pawning the paintings his artist friends had given him in order to sustain himself. His obituary in the *Times-Picayune* was only three sentences long. His remains were sent back to Indiana, where he was laid to rest next to his mother and father, just miles from the Midwestern home of his youth. His Whitesell’s epitaph reads:

Beloved “Pops” Whitesell of New Orleans Creator of “Margaret Holds the Floor” Hon. Master of Photography P.A.of A. Fellow P.S.A.

Figure 8

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

Although his work was significant in its day, widely praised and technically astute, Pops Whitesell's importance as a photographer and as a member of a French Quarter art community of the early 1900's has all but disappeared. Fellow photographer, Dan Leyrer, who lived and worked above Whitesell at 726 St. Peter, saved many of Whitesell's negatives and prints after his death, but a great number were also thrown out with the trash (Wonk, 1981). In 1978, art dealer Larry Borenstein and manager of Preservation Hall, Allan Jaffe, donated some 2,400 Whitesell negatives to the Special Collections Archive at Tulane University. Whitesell's work also lives on in the permanent collections of important cultural institutions like the Brooklyn Museum, the Smithsonian Portrait Gallery, the Chicago Historical Society, the New Orleans Museum of Art, and the Louisiana State Museum.

Whitesell's obsession with duplication becomes apparent when one considers how many of his negatives still exist despite the fact that a vast number were thrown out with the trash. After Hurricane Katrina cleanup at Preservation Hall, more than 4,000 additional Whitesell negatives were unearthed and among those, were many single images duplicated more than a dozen times. It would appear that Whitesell, in leaving so many copies of his work behind, was attempting to preserve his own legacy. It is clear that Whitesell worked in a community of artists grounded in the principle of preservation. Many of his closest friends were founders of the early French Quarter preservationist movement and relocated to the district to preserve its buildings and unique way of life. It is a fitting turn of events that Whitesell's former studio would one day become the home of jazz preservation – Preservation Hall – in the French Quarter. Even more coincidental

still, is the fact that a terrible tragedy – Hurricane Katrina – would shine light on a vast and forgotten collection of Whitesell's negatives that had been laying dormant in the rafters of his former home for more than four decades.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – ENDNOTES

[i] Stanonis points out that in actuality, the Opera House would have been known for its mixed audiences and as a place where black, Creole culture was acknowledged. Stanonis, Anthony J. (2006) *Creating the Big Easy: New Orleans and the Emergence of Modern Tourism, 1918-1945.* The University of Georgia Press. Page 196-197, 214.

[ii] In personal notes housed at the Louisiana State Museum in New Orleans, Whitesell describes Dr. Cline as his "dearest friend." Cline was regionally famous for incorrectly predicting the vulnerability of Galveston, Texas to hurricanes. His comments on the subject contributed to the city's decision not to put up a sea wall. The Galveston Hurricane of 1900 destroyed the town, and killed Cline's pregnant wife, along with thousands of others.

[iii] This letter from Whitesell's sister exists in the Jaffe private archive. The Jaffe family owns Preservation Hall and large numbers of New Orleans' historical items, including about 50 personal letters of Whitesell's.

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