



East Coast – West Coast – Gulf Coast: Prized Toys and Banks from Three Legendary Collections Unite at Bertoia’s Nov. 17-18 Annual Fall Auction



## THE CURTIS AND LINDA SMITH CHRISTMAS COLLECTION:



Linda Smith and her husband, the late Curtis “Curt” Smith (1945-2021), amassed one of the most envied of all Christmas collections. Californians who lived in Rancho Santa Fe before moving to Santa Barbara, the Smiths both enjoyed successful, high-level careers – Curt as a nuclear engineer with SAIC (Science Applications International Corp.) and Linda in the legal field as a writer of sentencing investigation reports for superior court cases.

They started out as American tin toy collectors and were members of the ATCA – Curt even served as president of the club – but because of work commitments, the Smiths were not always able to travel east to attend ATCA conventions. However, when they did find the time to travel, it was often to Europe, where toy-hunting was always at the top of their itinerary. A favorite event, Linda said, was Anthea Knowles’ London toy fair. “That’s where we bought a Santa car from a Paris dealer,” she said.

In the 1980s, through their good friend and fellow toy collector Tom Anderson, they added a new offshoot to their collecting pursuits: Christmas antiques.



“Tom was the first person in our circle of acquaintances to collect Christmas,” Linda recalled. “Then Margaret Schiffer’s first book about Christmas ornaments came out, and we became very interested. Through Tom, we were able to meet Mrs. Schiffer. He actually took us to her home where we were able to view her collection.”

Linda and Curt began collecting Christmas antiques in earnest, buying some of their favorite pieces from trailblazing collector/dealers like Bob Merck, Ida Long, and, of course, their friend and mentor, Tom. Over time, they formed a collection whose stellar contents include candy containers, noddors, belsnickles and ornaments. In addition, they dabbled in Easter antiques -- approximately half a dozen rabbits and half a dozen chickens were consigned to Bertioia’s along with the Christmas collection.

The Smiths’ ornaments are mostly the cotton batting type, and for a logical reason. “We had a dachshund who walked under the Christmas tree branches to try to drink water from the tree stand. When I saw that, I said, ‘That’s it. Only non-breakable ornaments from now on. No glass,’” Linda said.



Linda commented on some of the highlights to be auctioned in the November 17-18 auction:

- 18-inch pink antique papier-mache bellsnickle – “We bought it through a woman we met at Glendale (The All American Collectors’ Show) who was involved with Macy’s in San Francisco and did the big window displays. We loaned them some toys for that purpose. She came across the pink bellsnickle, which was old and all original, and offered it to us. We were worried about whether it would survive being shipped because it’s so fragile, but it did.”
- Big (24 to 26-inch) mechanical Santa Claus nodder – “It’s very old, has a stern face, and the mechanism is like what you see in nodding donkeys. It came from David Pressland, in 1994.”
- Erzgebirge mountain with miner figures, under large glass dome – “We consider Erzgebirge to be Christmas because it’s often found where you see Christmas antiques. We were in Prague for the ATCA convention. It was the first day and we were excited to go exploring. When we saw it, we immediately wanted it and didn’t even think about the shipping or the fragile glass dome. The seller said he would pack it with tissue, but we knew that wouldn’t be enough to get it home safely. During the same trip we were in Germany, where David Pressland and Uwe Breker were holding a private show. We made a deal with Uwe to pay an outrageous price for a piece he had if he would ship our Erzgebirge mountain home to us. He agreed, and it arrived in perfect condition.”
- Tall Santa candy container with beautiful clothing and big brass buttons – “I bought it in 1985 and have kept it all these years. It’s my favorite.”



Linda explained that she is planning to downsize and move from her spacious Santa Barbara residence to a smaller place that would be more appropriate to her current lifestyle.

“Through the years I’ve met such fun people and had so many wonderful times that the items become almost secondary after a while,” she said. “It’s time to look ahead.”

Bertoia’s Nov. 17-18, 2022 Annual Fall Auction also features superior-quality European toys, a Marklin Priscilla live-steam boat (ex Bill Bertoia collection), approximately 100 pressed-steel toys (Buddy ‘L,’ Kingsbury, Keystone, etc.) from two prominent collectors, horse-drawn toys, and a choice selection of figural cast-iron doorstops. The Smiths’ antique Christmas collection is complemented by a large collection of Dresden Christmas ornaments from another consignor.

The auction will take place at Bertoia’s gallery located at 2141 DeMarco Drive, Vineland, NJ 08360, starting at 10 a.m. ET each day. Live attendance is limited and by reservation only. Preview the week before the auction or by appointment only. Bid absentee, by phone, or live online through Bertoia Live or LiveAuctioneers. For additional information, to reserve a telephone line for bidding or a seat at the gallery, or to make a private-preview appointment, please call 856-692-1881, email [toys@bertoiiauctions.com](mailto:toys@bertoiiauctions.com) or visit Bertoia’s online: [www.bertoiiauctions.com](http://www.bertoiiauctions.com).

