

EPISODE TITLE: Prayer Kneeler - 'Prie Dieu'

CIRCA: 1600-Present

Guest Interview: Janice McNeil – Curator; Museum of Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist
Anne-Marie Hightower – Curator; Alexander Mouton House

Project: Our interpretation of a traditional French Prie-Dieu

A prie-Dieu (French: literally, "pray [to] God"), also known as 'kneeler' or prayer desk is a type of prayer desk primarily intended for private devotional use. Often found in churches of the European continent, it is a small ornamental wooden desk furnished with a sloping shelf for books, and a cushioned pad (kneeler) on which to kneel. Sometimes, instead of the sloping shelf, a padded arm rest will be provided. With Louisiana's strong French-Catholic heritage, the prie-Dieu became a fixture in the lives of the Acadian "Cajun" people.

The prie-Dieu appears not to have received its present name until the early part of the 17th century. At that period in France a small room or oratory was sometimes known by the same name. A similar form of chair, in domestic furniture is called "prie-Dieu" by analogy. Sometimes, a prie-Dieu will consist only of the sloped shelf for books without the kneeler.

Mrs. Janice McNeil and Anne-Marie Hightower will give insight and history for the traditional and modern examples and designs. We'll examine an elaborate version made for Bishop Schexnayder in the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist. Video locations are the Cathedral and Mouton House museums and the MT studio shop.



Mrs. Jan McNeil with the Bishop's prie-Dieu Traditional French prie Dieu