

TITLE

HISTORY OF THE HOUSE OF P. & F. CORBIN



ILLUSTRATED: INCLUDING PORTRAITS
OF MEN NOTABLY IDENTIFIED WITH
THE GROWTH OF THE HOUSE

ISSUED IN COMMEMORATION OF THE
FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
FOUNDING OF THE HOUSE *ON THE*
FOURTEENTH DAY OF FEBRUARY
IN THE YEAR *EIGHTEEN*
HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FOUR

C O N T E N T S

Frontispiece Allegory, Fifty Years of Progress, page four
 Author's Preface, page five
 Present Plant and Annexes, page six
 Title, page seven
 Copyright and Authorship, page eight
 Contents, page nine
 Illustrations, page ten
 Early New Britain, pages eleven and twelve
 Portrait of Philip Corbin, page fourteen
 Founder and Head of the House of Corbin, pages fifteen to twenty-two
 Doen, Corbin & Company, pages twenty-three to twenty-six
 Corbin, Whiting & Company, pages twenty-seven to thirty
 P. & F. Corbin—Copartnership, pages thirty-one to thirty-three
 P. & F. Corbin—Corporation, pages thirty-five to ninety-three
 P. & F. Corbin of New York, page ninety-five
 P. & F. Corbin, Philadelphia, page ninety-seven
 P. & F. Corbin, Chicago, page ninety-nine
 The American Hardware Corporation, Official Personnel, page one hundred
 P. & F. Corbin, Official Personnel, page one hundred and one
 Russell & Erwin Manufacturing Co., Official Personnel, page one hundred and two
 The Corbin Screw Corporation, Official Personnel, page one hundred and three
 Corbin Cabinet Lock Co., Official Personnel, page one hundred and four
 The Corbin Motor Vehicle Corporation, Official Personnel, page one hundred and five

I L L U S T R A T I O N S

Fifty Years of Progress,	page four
Present Plant and Annexes,	page six
Early New Britain,	page eleven
Portrait of Philip Corbin,	page fourteen
Philip Corbin Hewing Timber,	page sixteen
Philip Corbin in Bucknell's Shop,	page eighteen
Philip Corbin at Various Ages,	page nineteen
Frank Corbin,	page twenty-three
Ox Balls — Yoke of Oxen,	pages twenty-four and twenty-five
Lifting Handles, etc.,	page twenty-six
William Corbin,	page twenty-eight
John M. Spring,	page twenty-nine
George S. Corbin,	page thirty-two
Waldo Corbin,	page thirty-three
The Growth of the Plant,	page thirty-four
Brass Butts,	page thirty-seven
First Catalogue, issued 1852,	page thirty-eight
Portrait of Andrew Corbin,	page forty
Stephen J. Arnold,	page forty-two
Charles Peck,	page forty-four
Employees for More Than Thirty-five Years,	pages forty-six and forty-seven
Portrait of Charles H. Parsons,	page fifty
First Lock List, 1869,	page fifty-four
Designer at Work — Modeling,	pages fifty-six and fifty-seven
Chaser at Work — Pattern Maker,	pages fifty-eight and fifty-nine
Portrait of Charles E. Wetmore,	page sixty-two
Catalogues, 1870-1880,	page sixty-four
George W. Corbin,	page sixty-six
Portrait of A. N. Abbe,	page sixty-eight
Department Managers,	page seventy
Offices,	pages seventy-two and seventy-three
Molders at Work,	page seventy-four
Brass Molder Pouring,	page seventy-six
Electroplater,	page seventy-seven
Salesmen,	page seventy-eight
Byron Phelps,	page eighty
Portrait of Charles M. Jarvis,	page eighty-two
Building Operations,	page eighty-three
Locksmith at Work,	page eighty-four
Assembler — Grinding and Polishing,	page eighty-five
Packing Goods,	page eighty-six
Portrait of Charles Glover,	page eighty-eight
Shipping Goods,	page ninety
Art Hardware,	page ninety-two
New York Salesmen,	page ninety-four
Philadelphia Salesmen,	page ninety-six
Chicago Salesmen,	page ninety-eight
The Day's Work Done,	page one hundred and six



THE need for a larger capital became more urgent as the business grew larger and the trade made demands for more goods than could be supplied with the facilities at hand, and after much deliberation and discussion it was decided to incorporate the business and sell enough stock to get the money needed.

The members of the firm of North & Stanley, who owned the premises P. & F. Corbin then occupied, and whose factory was under the same roof, had had an excellent opportunity to learn of the way in which the business was done and the outlook for the future, and were very willing to buy stock in the new corporation as an investment. The relations of the two concerns were of a very friendly nature, and it was decided to make them more intimate and personal and to give the North & Stanley people an interest in return for the money they advanced for the enlargement of the business.

On February 14, 1854, the date whose fiftieth anniversary this book commemorates, seven men met in the little packing-room of P. & F. Corbin, the office being too small to accommodate so many persons at one time, and there the following articles of association were signed:

ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION.

"We, the subscribed, pursuant to the laws of the state relating to joint stock corporations, do hereby associate and form ourselves into a corporation, under the name of P. & F. Corbin, for the purpose of manufacturing, buying and selling articles of iron, of brass and of other materials commonly used in the hardware trade and of merchandising in the same, the manufacturing to be carried on in the town of New Britain and state of Connecticut. The capital stock of this corporation shall be fifty thousand dollars, divided into two thousand shares of twenty-five dollars each, of which we, the subscribers, take the number of shares set opposite our respective names."

These men, who were thus the charter members of the company, were Philip Corbin, Frank Corbin, Waldo Corbin and William Corbin of P. & F. Corbin, and Frederic H. North, Oliver Stanley and John B. Talcott of North

& Stanley. Of the seven, Philip Corbin, the president, and John B. Talcott, a director, are still identified with the company's interests.

The company was thus capitalized at fifty thousand dollars and the stock was divided into two thousand shares with a par value of twenty-five dollars each. The three newcomers were sold seven hundred and twenty of the two thousand shares, leaving the controlling vote in the hands of the Corbins, who retained the active conduct of the business and carried it on with the same freedom as under the former conditions.

On February 21st, the officers were elected, F. H. North being made the president, Philip Corbin, secretary, and Frank Corbin, treasurer, the board of directors being composed of these three officers.

The rapidly-growing business multiplied the labor of management, which up to this time had been solely in the charge of Philip Corbin. At about this time he began to entrust to his associates more and more of the execution of the work, relieving himself of much of the care and responsibility connected with the production of the goods and the details of selling, and giving a larger portion of his time to the general oversight of the business. There had not heretofore been much necessity for system in management or division of duties, William, Waldo, and Frank turning to with a will wherever their efforts were most needed, giving to Philip their cordial support and coöperation, but relying upon him for the planning of the work. Now, however, with the transfer of responsibility for different features of the business, there came a division of duties.

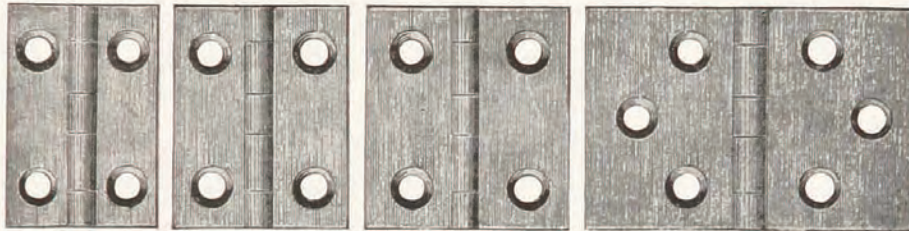
Frank Corbin, who had made a number of trips selling goods for the concern, was given charge of this portion of the work in the East. It was decided to open a sales office in New York and here he went to take the management of the store, taking with him his brother, George, a man named John Rogers being hired to travel from the factory to cover the West, making the first trip into this region for the company. He proved an excellent salesman and did much in the way of introducing Corbin goods in this new and undeveloped territory.

William Corbin, a young man of twenty years, who had shown a special aptitude in the production of goods, was made the first superintendent and put in charge of the mechanical end of the business. A prominent part in the conduct of affairs was given to Waldo Corbin. While Philip Corbin was thus relieved of much of the responsibility for the detail connected with the work, he kept as closely informed regarding all branches of it as before, and was thus

able to direct affairs intelligently and yet have more time and thought to devote to the larger work of shaping the policy and directing the general course of the business. Its rapid growth made increased care and watchfulness necessary, and brought new problems constantly before him for solution, taxing his energies to the utmost. At the same time, he managed the sales for the territory covered from the factory and a portion of his time was spent on the road away from home.

At about the time that the company was incorporated, wrought brass butts, which the little catalogue described as "Warranted Stronger than Cast, and True in the Joints," were added to the line and put upon the market. These goods were then only made by one other American firm in this country, the Scovill Manufacturing Company of Waterbury, Conn., of which Mr. J. M. L. Scovill, the founder, was also the manager. In order to introduce the goods and induce dealers to buy them in preference to the older brand, P. & F. Corbin sold them

somewhat below the Scovill prices, and Mr. Scovill several times sent a Mr. Partree to call upon P. & F.



BRASS BUTTS

Corbin and expostulate with them for the prices they were making. Meeting with no success, he finally came to deliver an ultimatum, and meeting Mr. Philip Corbin on the little platform in front of the office door, told him that if P. & F. Corbin did not advance the price of brass butts the price would be put down to where the Corbin factory could not make them, even though it cut below the Scovill cost.

"Go back to Mr. Scovill," said Mr. Corbin, "and tell him that when I was a boy and hunted muskrats I never shot a muskrat while it was under water, but when his head appeared I fired—and got him. Now, if Mr. Scovill wants to play a muskrat game he can, but every time his head shows above water I'll bring him down," and with this message Mr. Partree was dismissed.

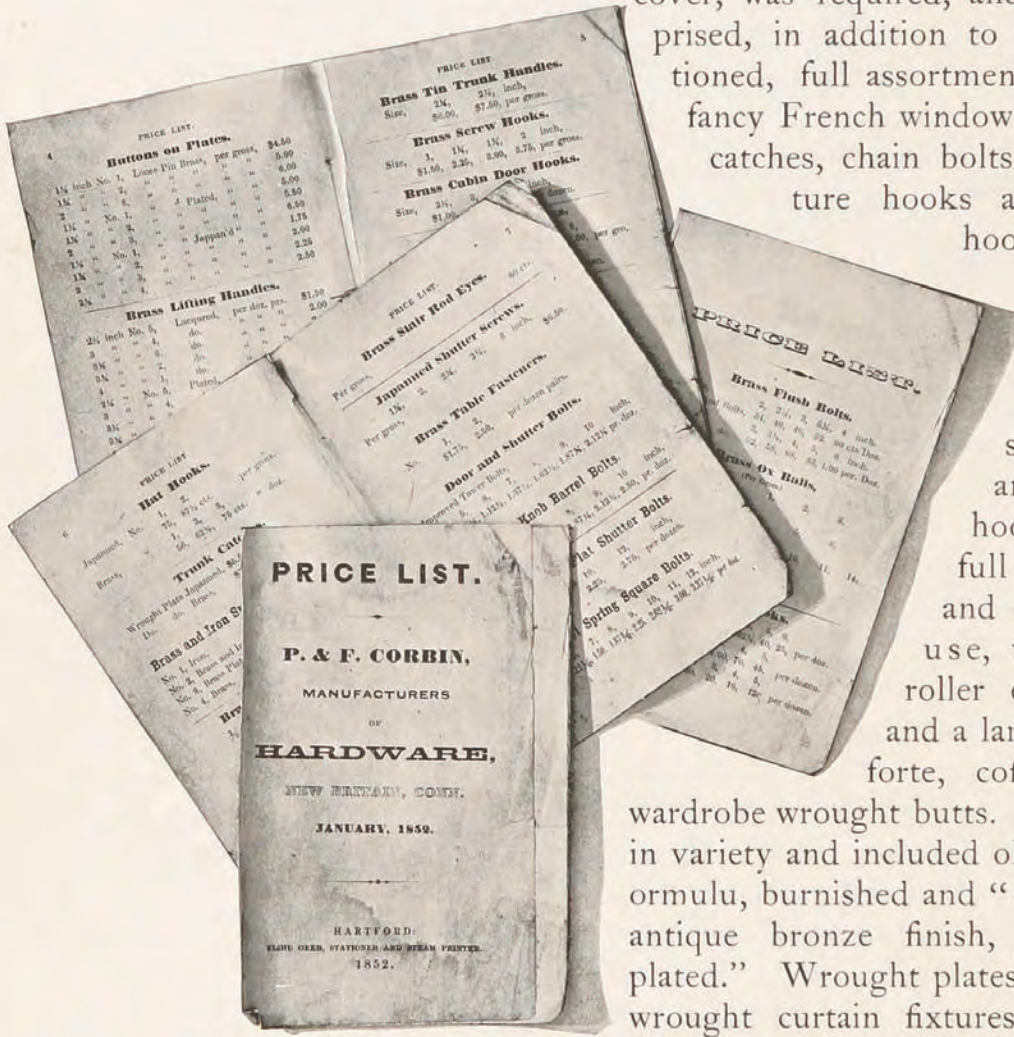
A few days later Mr. Scovill appeared at the old Humphrey House in New Britain and asked for a personal interview with the Corbin managers. When Philip and Frank Corbin appeared he greeted them with, "Which is the fellow who hunts muskrats?" The meeting ended with the most friendly feeling on both sides.

In 1849 or 1850, Corbin, Whiting & Co. issued the first price list of Corbin goods, a card which would slip into an ordinary envelope, with the price list upon one side and the firm's name upon the other. In 1852, P. & F. Corbin, the copartnership, issued a little book with eight pages and cover, which listed all the goods of manufacture and included some bolts made by Frederick T. Stanley. In 1856, a somewhat larger book, with thirty-six pages and

cover, was required, and the articles listed comprised, in addition to the goods already mentioned, full assortments of cupboard catches, fancy French window catches, closet and trunk catches, chain bolts, cabin door hooks, picture hooks and nails, looking-glass

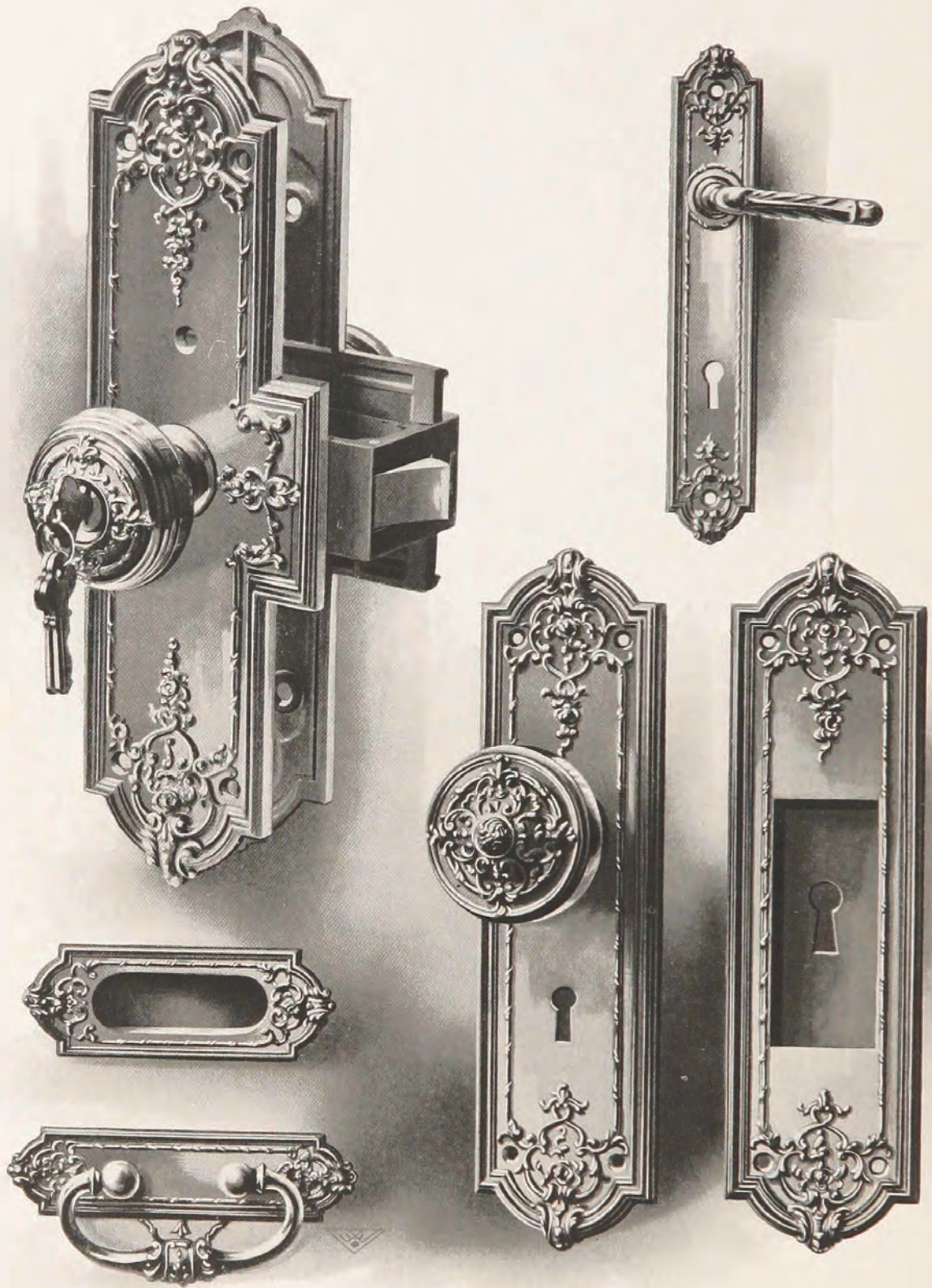
hooks, wardrobe and coat and hat hooks in large variety, sash fasteners and lifts, drawer and drop handles, door pulls, shutter screws, house, tea, and call bells, bird-cage hooks, door knockers, a full line of the window-shade and curtain fixtures then in use, with rack pulleys and roller ends, and tassel hooks, and a large assortment of piano-forte, coffin, railroad-coach, and

wardrobe wrought butts. The finishes had grown in variety and included olive green, bronze, brass, ormulu, burnished and "dead," silvered, iron with antique bronze finish, japanned and "electroplated." Wrought plates to cupboard catches and wrought curtain fixtures foreshadowed the time when the drop-hammers should displace the



FIRST CATALOGUE, ISSUED 1852

foundry in many goods. In almost all of these goods P. & F. Corbin were the first—or among the first—of American manufacturers to put them upon the market, in pursuance with their policy to so far as possible avoid domestic competition. The lifting handles, first made in 1850 (Corbin's present



ART HARDWARE