



# The Doorknob Collector

Number 33

January-February 1989

## American hardware industry needs recognition

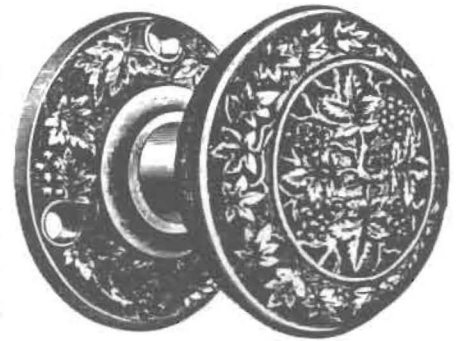
### Time for commemorative stamp

By Charles Wardell

**D**ependant on imports for generations, the young American nation was trying to make it alone in the 18th and 19th centuries. Living conditions were poor and few conveniences made life short and oftentimes bleak. Cold houses, coal oil lighting, coarse clothing, foot or animal transportation, 14 hours daily work, little or no medical care and other factors contributed to a short and laborious life. For the average man, hunting, fishing, worship and singing were the escapes from reality. Hard liquor, for some, was another escape.

Now, behold the development of the educational system so essential to any progress. The child was considered the savior of the family and the school was a guarantee of brighter days. From his creation, man has been uplifted by knowledge and training and any improvements in life emanates in a trained mind. A developing love of beauty brings about a desire to decorate the common things. Plain boards are carved, pottery and glass is painted or molded, black iron is shaped into foliage, fabrics are dyed and embroidered, "puckered and pressed to look their best." Style demanded embellishment.

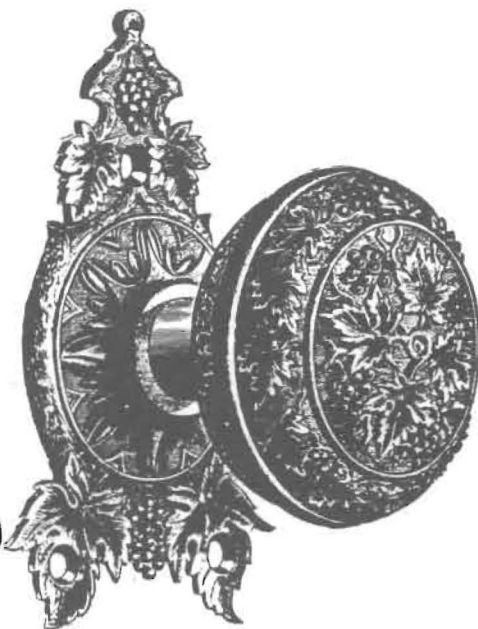
This decoration was applied to buildings and its furnishings and, at times, there was hardly any space unadorned by some natural or contrived device. True, some of this decoration is tasteless but style forever changes. A vernacular (native style) emerged that has been cursed and blessed. Whatever ones feeling as to its worth, it tells a lot about the American character. An ornate doorknob and escutcheon on the front door literally shouted, "we are proud of this place!"



Mallory, Wheeler & Co.

The American builders hardware industry was born in 1833 in Terryville, Connecticut. Eli Terry, John C. Lewis and William McKee opened a factory for the manufacture of clocks and locks. Brass and iron has been worked for centuries by the smiths but a factory where a group of men and machines produced a finished product was a new idea in America, The "climate" for this venture was right. A growing population and a ready market for its product along with available men, money, materials, method and ambition brought about a prospering industry employing thousands of men.

The era has been glorified by the cowboy as the star. The Conestoga wagon, the locomotive, the colt revolver, the telegraph and the telephone, the sewing machine, the light



Mallory, Wheeler & Co.

## Texas has large flea market



MALLORY, WHEELER & COMPANY.

Hardware.....continued from Page 1

bulb and radio all contributed to our culture and have been honored by a commemorative postage stamp. This is good but what about the nails and needles, knives and knobs, hinges and hasps, locks and latches that went into the building of our country?

It seems that the universal presence of the necessities has made them unappreciated so a little tribute is due.

As collectors, preservationists and restorers we serve as historians of Americana. We should be proud of the service we are performing as comparatively little of the early builders hardware survives and little or nothing documents its existence except in the books of Maude Eastwood, Len Blumin and Tom Hennessy. Our hope is that our early hardware will eventually be recognized as a shaper of American life. ■

Reports from ADCA members as to their success at the Canton, Texas, flea market have been mixed. Some say they found nice knobs, others claim they found nothing. One thing for sure, the flea market at Canton, known as Trade Days, is big.

Held the three days prior to the first Monday of the month, Trade Days will have about 5,000 dealers and more than 60,000 tourists and bargain-hunters. They congregate on more than 100 acres, which is devoted to First Monday Trade Days and is billed by the city as the world's largest flea market.

The next trade days will be February 3-5 and again on March 3-5. Canton, located about 50 miles southeast of Dallas, is on Texas Route 19 just south of Interstate 20.

The Dallas Morning News reported that the "vendors may seem to be jammed into the tree studded grounds, but there's a method to this mercantile madness. The 15 miles of paved walkways are divided into nearly 100 rows, and a directory lists the booths by type of merchandise, row number and individual lot on each row. The parking lots alone cover another 100 acres (the fee is \$2 a car)."

Finding a place to stay in Canton, if you plan to visit the First Monday Trade Days, can be a real problem. There are only about 150 hotel and bed-and-breakfast rooms locally and many are reserved months in advance. Many visitors stay in the Dallas area or nearby cities of Athens and Tyler.

Canton, which once viewed Trade Days with contempt now welcomes the crowds. The fame has captured the attention of the national news media according to a report in the Dallas Morning News.

Joe Collins, Canton's Chamber of Commerce manager, is quoted in the Morning News, "We've just recently began an active role in promoting Canton as a place to come and enjoy." The market generates more than \$1 million in annual revenues. "We're sitting here, sort of like a diamond in the rough," he says. ■

### The Doorknob Collector

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*LOCK ENTHUSIASTS ARE SURE TO APPRECIATE THE HISTORY  
OF LOCKS DISPLAYED AT THE LOCK MUSEUM OF AMERICA.*

*by A. Michle Shaw*

**I**n Terryville, CT, the centerpoint of the triangle that encompasses

Torrington, Waterbury and Bristol, stands The Lock Museum of America. Since 1972, when the museum was established in a small store on Terryville's Main Street, the museum has grown to 1,000 members and is overseen by Curator Thomas Hennessy.

Today, the museum boasts seven display rooms. The newest of these is an extensive lock collection that includes a cannon ball safe, 30 early-era time locks, safe escutcheon plates and a large number of British safe locks, door locks, padlocks, handcuffs and keys. Another display room, known as the Eagle Lock Co. Room, contains over 1,000 locks and keys manufactured from 1854 to 1954. In addition, for the historically minded, the display lists Eagle Lock employees in 1889 and their weekly wages during the period. At one time, Eagle was the largest trunk and cabinet lock maker in the world.

#### **ABUNDANT DIVERSITY**

The Bank Lock Room comprises a selection of bank locks, vault locks, safe locks and time locks. One of the vault locks was in service during the Lincoln administration in the White House. The Emhart Room contains a large display of ornate hardware manufactured by Corbin and Russwin. Several pieces are gold-plated and enameled.



One of the animated displays shows how a pin tumbler lock works.

Recently added is a large, 20' long display of mounted doorknobs and escutcheons made by Russwin and P and E Corbin during the Victorian era. These are extensively detailed in styles such as Roman, Greek, French and Italian Renaissance, Gothic, Flemish and Elizabethan English.

The Yale Room accommodates locks manufactured by the company from 1860 to 1950. One of the attractions here is the original patent model of the mortise cylinder pin tumbler lock designed by Linus Yale, Jr., in 1865. While this device is considered the greatest invention in the history of lockmaking, it is certainly not without historical precedence. Close by is a 4,000 year old Egyptian-made pin tumbler lock.

These also is a large display of locks and hardware made by Sargent and Co. in New Haven, CT. Several early exit devices and door closers are on display as well.

Because lock manufacturing at one time was Connecticut's largest industry, it is a fitting location for the museum. The Lock Museum of America is growing yearly and has occupied a building of its own since 1980. Thomas Hennessy sees the museum as a part of American history, not exclusively of interest to those in the lock or hardware manufacturing industries. Anyone who is associated with these fields, however, will find the museum's collections especially intriguing. The museum is open every day except Monday from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m., May through October. For an experience in ornate design, historical relevance and unique industrial memorabilia, the Lock Museum is a must-see stop for anyone traveling through Connecticut.

See Museum...page 8

Antique Doorknob Collectors of America welcomes letters from its readers. Address all correspondence to "Letters to the Editors," P. O. Box 126, Eola, IL 60519-0126. ADCA reserves the right to edit all submissions.

# Ornamental design in antique doorknobs

by Len Blumin

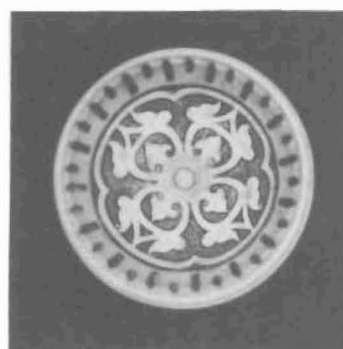
## FOURFOLD SYMMETRY

- H-276 Vernacular. Iron with bronze rim.  
H-277 Vernacular. Circa 1885.  
H-278 Vernacular. Circa 1885.  
H-279 Vernacular. Pretty little knob, deeply concave. Cast as a single piece, probably for a screen door.  
H-280 Vernacular. Niles/Chicago, Smallish knob.  
H-281 Vernacular. A bit crude.

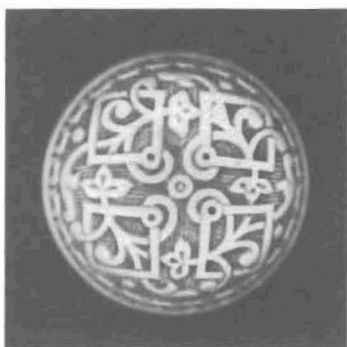
H-276



H-279



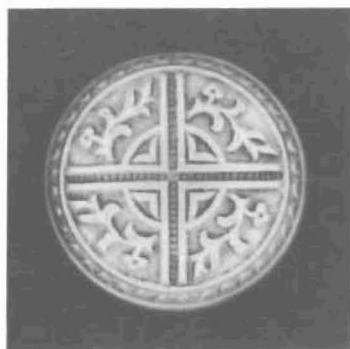
H-277



H-280



H-278



H-281



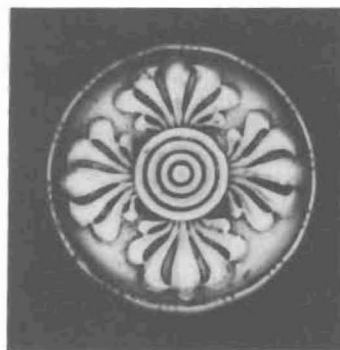
FOURFOLD SYMMETRY  
(continued)

- H-282 Vernacular.  
H-467 Wrought.  
H-468 Niles/Chicago. Pleasing design.  
H-469 Greek style.  
H-470 Similar, in some respects, to H-469.  
H-471 Possibly Niles/Chicago.

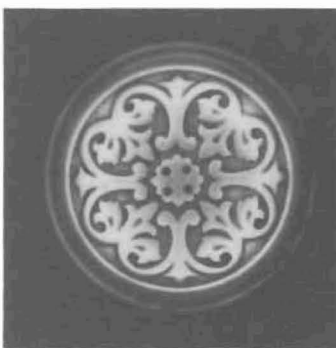
H-282



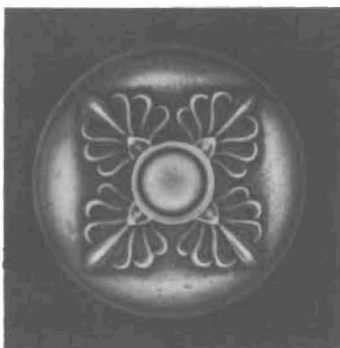
H-469



H-467



H-470



H-468



H-471



## "WHAT PUBLICATIONS ARE SAYING"

The Antiques & Auction News has been very generous in giving ADCA publicity. We particularly enjoyed their comments on Len Blumin's regular feature and Win Applegate's story. For those who do not get their fine publication, we are reprinting the article. For more information about Antiques & Auctions News write P.O. Box 500, Mount Joy, PA 17552.

Dorothy Ann Miller, president of Antique Doorknob Collectors of America, reports in the November-December issue of *The Doorknob Collector* that the annual convention in Indianapolis, Indiana, was an unqualified success.

The theme for the 1989 convention, slated for September 21-24 in Iowa City, Iowa, will be Mallory, Wheeler and Company. Maude Eastwood's feature article on the company in the latest *Doorknob Collector* provides much information on the company.

Until the publication of *The Antique Doorknob* by Maude Eastwood in 1976, doorknob collectors had little or no communication with fellow collectors.

As a direct result of the publication of this book, a convention was held in September 1981 in Waverly, Iowa. Collectors from twelve states, mostly strangers to each other, met and formed the Antique Doorknob Collectors of America, an organization devoted to

associating those interested in collecting antique doorknobs and related hardware.

Officers were elected, and yearly conventions are held in various cities. Seminars, banquets, and trading sessions are held, and, most importantly, friendships are made and renewed.

A continuing campaign to enroll others and to share knowledge is a priority. Future plans include a permanent museum of antique hardware.

Always an eye catcher is the collection of doorknob photos presented in each issue of *The Doorknob Collector* by Len Blumin.

Collectors and non-collectors alike will enjoy "Trials of a Convention" by ADCA member Win Applegate. The irony at the conclusion of the article is priceless!

Anyone interested in this organization and its newsletter should write to: Doorknob Collectors of America, Inc., P.O. Box 126, Eola, Illinois 60519-0126.



1988 Convention Award Winners

Left to right: Ray & Loretta Nemeec (best single knob), Len Blumin (best Russell & Erwin display), Kae & Ray Zyc (best metallic and best non-metallic displays)

### DOORKNOBS TO BE FEATURED

A story on doorknob collecting and the **Antique Doorknob Collectors of America** has been tentatively scheduled to appear sometime during January in *Antique Week*. It is a weekly antique paper that services primarily the Midwest.

If you would like more information about this publication, the address is *Antique Week*, P.O. Box 90, Knightstown, IN 46148.

# Letters

## THE RIGID DOORKNOB

All the doorknobs in my house were made by Augustuv B. Prouty. These seem to be a rarity as the only buildings I have seen them in are around this area. I have taken several pictures of the doors and knobs. The lock was patented on October 24, 1882.

I am enclosing an article written by Henry Tower about the doorknob. Do you have any additional information on this doorknob? If not, I hope what I have sent you can be added to your data.

**Ernest L. Roberts**  
Spencer, Mass.

(The following is from "Historical Sketches of Spencer, Massachusetts," Volume IV, Page 128, by Henry Tower)

In 1882, Augustuv B. Prouty, son of Liberty Prouty, a wire manufacturer, invented and patented the "Rigid Doorknob." He was born in Spencer, Massachusetts, October 5, 1832; died in Providence, Rhode Island, July 19, 1897. At the age of 13 he left home and went to Leicester to learn the card clothing business. In 1833 he moved to Worcester, and in 1881 to Providence, Rhode Island.

While in Worcester he constructed a card machine which doubled the capacity of the machines then used. He took His machine to Paris where it attracted much attention at the Paris Exposition. Not only was a

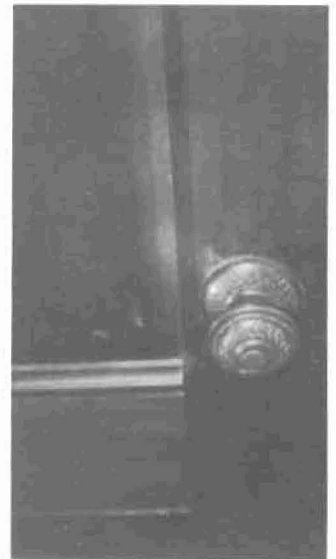
Medal freely given but Emperor Napoleon III made a special visit to see the machine in operation and personally congratulated Mr. Prouty.

Later Prouty went to Providence, Rhode Island to manufacturer the "Rigid Doorknob," in connection with the business of the New England Butt Company. The knob was a great success in Providence but health failed before he could introduce it in other large places. Many of the houses in Spencer do have these knobs and they are very efficient. Mr. Prouty was quite a rhymnster. This is what he had to say about his new knob:

"Each year to all things  
bring something new  
That makes the heart with  
gladness throb  
The last, of which we offer  
you  
Makes doors complete - a  
rigid knob.

Once on a door 'twill so  
remain  
As bolts hold firm "twill  
never bob  
And all the old knobs put to  
shame  
By this most novel rigid  
knob.

This knob you'll find is  
always tight  
As corn grown on it's mother  
cob  
Unlike it though when it is  
ripe  
There's no come off to this  
new knob."



(Editors' note: For additional information about Prouty's Rigid Door Knob, see pages 179 and 180 in *Antique Builders' Hardware Knobs & Accessories* by Maude L. Eastwood.)

**ADCA CONVENTION**

September 21-24, 1989

Iowa City, Iowa

**FROM THE ARCHIVES**  
by Alice Chadonich



**CLASSIFIED AD SECTION**

The Emil Miller Memorial Library has been enhanced by two fine donations.

The ADCA members purchased and donated "Early Locks and Lockmakers of America" by Thomas Hennessy.

John Holland donated the following books:

1. A Collection of Yale Catalogs
2. Garcy Hardware Co. Cat. No. 25
3. Brass Goods Mfg. Co. 1911
4. Schlangen Artistic Bldrs. Hdw. Cat. No 10
5. Logan Gregg Hdw. Co. Cat. No. 110

This brings the total number of catalogs in the Library to 22.

A thank you to Steve Menchhofer who has loaned his Yale Catalog No. 26 to be copied for the Archives

Members are reminded that your dues entitles you to advertise items for sale, trade or wanted at no charge.

**FOR SALE.** 19 antique rosewood/walnut doorknob sets with escutcheon plates. \$20 per set postpaid. Will consider best offer for lot. James Baird, P.O. Box 516, Petersham, MA 01366.

**FOR SALE.** Book, Victorian Decorative Art by Leonard Blumin. \$11.00 postpaid for each book. ADCA, P.O. Box 126, Eola, IL 60519-0126.

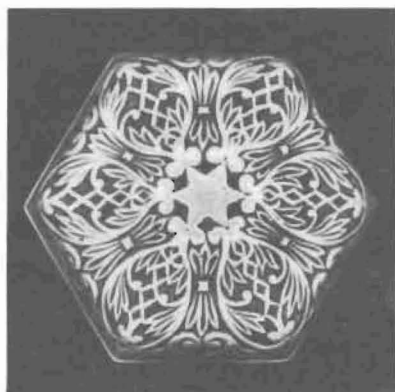
**FOR SALE.** Cassette. Interview of Robert Twombly on Louis Sullivan, His Life and His Work. \$7.95 postpaid, payable to ADCA P.O. Box 126, Eola, IL 60519-0126.

**WANTED.** Mallory Wheeler, any of their hardware. Also wanted B-126, B-128, D-119, H-251, J-101, J-102, K-302 (two). Also collect furniture, cabinet and window hardware. Have many knobs to trade, including B-113, B-114, B-215, B-218, E-105, H-111, H-204, H-206, H-211, H-213, H-217, H-220, H-221, J-209, J-214 and many others not in Len Blumin's book. Dale Sponaugle, 247 Summit Ave., Buffalo, NY 14214-1933. Ph: 716-834-3970.

**WANTED.** Trade or buy, knob with three running deer. Ed Thrall, 145 Chamberlain Rd., Broad Brook, CT 06036. Ph: 203-623-5278.

**WANTED.** Knobs, number K-214 with arabic design, flat or round. Also, any Victorian hardware (knobs, plates, locks, hinges, etc., for restoration project.) John Decker, 517 Clayton St., San Francisco, Ca 94117.

**WANTED.** Trade or buy. Knobs with single letter. I am trying to complete the alphabets. Don Friedman, 4900 Jerome, Skokie, IL 60077. Ph: 312-679-4424.



Museum...continued from page 3

**ADDED ATTRACTION**

While in Terryville, you should also visit the Eli Terry, Jr., water wheel, which is located two blocks west of the museum on Main Street. This 20' diameter water wheel has a gear around the circumference that adds speed to the shaft, which was used to operate the machinery of one of America's first lock factories, Lewis McKee and Co., in the early 1840's. This wheel is the only original one of its kind left in the country, making it a special attraction. (reprinted with permission of Tom Hennessy.)

**Counter Culture / By Maratta and Maratta**

